



I REINCARNATED FOR NOTHING

BOOK 01

Toika

EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

I Reincarnated For Nothing

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by

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Synopsis

“My life as a demon... No. My life as human is really...”

Artpe was supposed to live a charmed life as the 4th strongest in the Demon King's Army. However, his life was cut short by the hero's blade.

With his previous life's memory intact, Artpe will live his life again. His boldness and resourcefulness will make him unrivalled!

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Chapter 1 – I'm a Hero!?

It had been two days, since he was reincarnated as a human male child, This was when Artpe came to a decision.

“I have to kill the Demon King.”

It was a really fucked up situation, but he had to kill the Demon King.

Why?

The reason was obvious. A Demon King's 1st priority was to kill all of humanity.

Artpe was a human now!

Would he have been better being reborn into the Demon race? No way.

The reason why the bastard was trying to kill all the humans was the fact that the Demon King's Innate Ability didn't allow him to dominate over humans. His Innate Ability only worked on the Demon race, and the Demon King had been thorough in catching all the demons. He had put all the Demons under his rule.

Since the Demon King existed in the same era as him, there was no way he'll become free unless he killed the Demon King.

Artpe had lamented when he was confronted with this decision. He wanted to be alive to see the hopes and dreams of the future.

‘Why in the hell did I have to be sent back to the past! If I was born 3 years after the hero or the Demon King was killed, I could have lived in the countryside without any ambitions. I could have just lived, while I tended cows!’

He could somewhat guess at the mechanism behind his reincarnation. His Read All Creation had evolved into its second stage. He didn't know the exact cause, but he knew this was all related to his ability.

He always knew his ability was unusual, but he never expected it to be able to bend time and space. No, the fact that there even was a Step 2 to his Innate Ability was a surprise for him!

However, the problem he now faced was the fact that his Innate Ability had distorted not only time, but the cause-and-effect relationship of events.

“Artpe!”

The door opened in the same fashion as two days ago. A bright light entered into the hut, and Artpe already knew the name of the girl entering the hut.

“I knew you would come, ‘Maetel’.”

“You were waiting for me! I’m so happy!”

The girl let out a bright smile in front of Artpe. She looked very young, but he was sure that she was one of the heroes in his memories, who had invaded the Demon King’s castle. He had also verified this fact through his Read All Creation ability, so it was irrefutable.

“Why would I wait for you? Just looking at you make me feel anxious.”

“Anxious?Ah, jeez~ Artpe~ ”

The 12 year old hero was under a false impression when she heard Artpe’s words. She squirmed and twisted her body in embarrassment. Artpe groaned when he saw the young hero fall into a delusion.

During his past role as one of the Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon King’s army, the Demon King had ordered Artpe to gather information about the hero. In truth, it was a task beneath even the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings, but that fact wasn’t important right now.

The important part was the fact that the past hero didn’t have a

childhood friend.

“Let’s go play being heroes, Artpe!”

“I’m sorry, but I’m sick of both the heroes and the Demon King.”

“Then you can be one of the Demon King army’s Four Heavenly Kings!”

“That is one thing I’ll never do!”

Artpe pushed aside the hero, who came at him in a playful manner. He kept letting out a sigh. He had wished for a life where he wasn’t entangled with the Demon King, so this time around he was entangled with the hero. If he had the opportunity to meet the goddess of fate, he would most definitely flip her off!

Instead of being entangled with the hero, he would have preferred to live life as the normal Villager A. Then he would be able to focus on his profession, while leaving all the problems of this world to the hero. He could just put his trust in the hero, since her unlimited growth potential would let her overcome everything.

If he was unlucky enough to chance upon the hero’s party, he would just say, ‘If you follow down this road, you will come upon the Demon King’s Castle!’ Or he would tell them, ‘Our town’s population of wildcats have gotten out of control. Could you help us catch them?’

He would just tell them some half assed excuse to get rid of them!

‘This world is already different from the past I knew’

To be precise, Artpe had reincarnated as the hero’s childhood friend. From this point on, the future would be in flux. Even if he ran away from the hero right now, the changed timeline wouldn’t revert back. It wasn’t a realistic possibility.

“Eh-whew. Artpe is trying to play by himself again. Then I have no choice. I’ll stick by your side.”

“No, I really don’t need you right now. Could you leave me alone?”

“But I need Artpe.”

Artpe despaired. What the hell did he do before he became aware of his previous life’s memories? Why was he in such a good relationship with the hero! It was so bad that even if he managed to run away, he worried the hero would track him down!

“You....”

“Eh-heh-heh.”

The hero let out a simple and honest laugh as she sat next to Artpe. It seemed events weren’t going to proceed in accordance to Artpe’s wishes.

This was a problem. Artpe’s biggest worry was the relationship he had with the hero.

A hero was literally a walking box of storm and calamity. Even the most peaceful town would be put in danger when the hero became involved. Moreover, anyone who encounters the hero becomes embroiled in the hero’s business.

In the past, there was a very famous story about the hero taking every valuable item when passing through each town. The most insidious part about this story was the fact the townspeople had an irresistible urge to give whatever they possessed to the hero. If the hero fulfilled a request, one would have to give up a treasure as recompense!

So what would his life be like as the childhood friend of the hero!

‘No. I don’t know how the future will unfold. This girl might not awaken to become a hero.’

If a Demon King existed, a hero always appeared. However, Artpe had reincarnated as a human, so the future had changed. It wasn’t a certainty that Maetel would awaken as a hero.

“Still, I wouldn’t bet on it.”

Maetel would become a hero, and as her childhood friend, he would get swept up in her business.

In truth, that scenario was the most likely one to come true. In this world, the most talented person was chosen to become the hero. Artpe had used his Read All Creation to verify the talent possessed by the 12 year old Maetel. She was so outstanding that it made one wonder if the gods made a mistake in creating her.

He followed this thread of logic to come to his previous conclusion.

He had to kill the Demon King.

“My life as a demon... No. My life as a human is really....”

Artpe wrapped his head with his hands as he despaired. Maetel consoled him.

“Hang in there, Artpe! We have to endure, and we have to live five times the life we have already lived!”

“Where did you learn such a phrase?”

“I learned it from Artpe.”

It seemed he wasn’t a normal guy even before he recovered his memories! Artpe’s head started to hurt more. Maetel, who didn’t know his inner thoughts, kept smiling.

“I only want to live a quiet life.”

“You always say those words, Artpe.”

“However, the world won’t leave me alone.”

“That is also one of your favorite phrases you like to speak.”

“It isn’t really important how I got here. How should I proceed from now on.... Mmmm?”

He grumbled as he started responding to Maetel when a flash of light illuminated the inside of his mind.

Until now, he had assumed that the future was distorted, because he had reincarnated as the hero's childhood friend. However, was that actually true?

In the past, Artpe had used his Read All Creation to track the hero's whereabouts. Of course, he also had a complete grasp of what developed in the human world.

Would everything he remembered change just because of Artpe's presence? He was only a single person.

'There's no way that would happen.'

Yes. At best, an additional male child was born in a mountain village. There was no way such an event would cause the war to be canceled or a king to be poisoned!

However, how could that be the only implication? He knew the location of legendary thief's grave. The grave held riches. He also knew the locations of the Archmage's ruin, Balrok's Nest, and Archmage Rain of Louin's Magic Tome. They would be in the same place as the locations in his memories!

"My god."

He finally realized the whole truth, and a shiver ran up his body. His Read All Creation ability allowed him to remember what had happened in the human world and the demon world. It didn't matter if a lot of event in his future would change. He still had many information that he could use to his advantage!

There were many riches, many magic, many skills and many hidden hunting grounds!

"If I can acquire all of this with her...."

"Ah, Artpe."

Maetel's cheeks turned red. Artpe had mumbled his words, and it seemed another big misunderstanding had occurred. However, Artpe was too excited to worry about it.

“If that happens, maybe…….”

He'll be able to compress the development process of the hero, and she would be able to gain items that were never in the possession of her previous self. If he could let her gain everything he figured out with his Read All Creation ability, the killing of the Demon King might not be a problem!

If he could make that happen, he would be free! Moreover, he could use the position of being the hero's childhood friend to lead a peaceful life!

The future he could foresee was letting out a radiant golden light. Artpe suddenly stood up from his seat. Maetel also stood up.

“All right. Leave everything to me, hero.”

“Hero? As expected, you do want to play hero!”

“I'm not talking about playing house with you. I've never been as serious as this moment in my life.”

“……ah, all right.”

The hero's face had turned red, and she kept nodding her head.

“I'll leave everything to Artpe.”

“You just nodded your head. You can't take it back.”

“This is true for Artpe too! You can't back out of this!”

Artpe was satisfied with Maetel's answer. At this point in time, the two of them completely misunderstood what each of them were promising. Artpe was dreaming about a peaceful future, so he hadn't realized this fact.

“All right. Then you should head back for now. I'll have to be thorough in making a plan for us.”

“A plan... You are being very earnest about this. All right! I'll go wait patiently for you!”

Maetel turned around, and she opened the door to the hut. She

was about to exit when she said, “Oh”, as if she had just remembered something. She called out towards Artpe.

“You do know what is happening in the afternoon, right? Baptism Ritual!”

“Baptism Ritual? Ah!”

When one was born into the Demon race, one possessed all of one’s abilities from the start. Demons had to be ready to fight as soon as they were born. However, humans were different. Humans had to contact the gods through the priests, and a Class was given to each human. The Classes ranged from carpenter, farmer, adventurer, warrior, etc. A human’s station in life was determined at that point. The humans call it the Baptism Ritual.

“What Class will I receive? I’m looking forward to it!”

“I’m also looking forward to it, but I could already guess what my Class is.”

“That’s amazing, Artpe!”

There was limit on what Class one could acquire, and it depended on one’s station in life, and one’s ability. One cannot become a knight unless one was a noble. One cannot become the heir to the throne unless one was the son of a king. If one didn’t have the ability to manipulate Mana, one couldn’t become a magician.

Still, it didn’t mean one couldn’t escape an already chosen Class.....

Artpe smiled as he felt the unrefined Mana circulate around his body.

Was it because he was a Demon in the past? Currently, he was only a 12 year old child, yet he had a large reserve of Mana. Moreover, he could wield the Mana freely. Unless something went wrong, he would probably become a magician.

“You’ll probably become a hero.”

“Hero? Of course, I do like to pretend and play at being a hero, but.....”

Maetel let out a timid laugh.

“Truthfully, there is one thing I want more than me being a hero.”

“Ah. Is that so?”

“I would love it if Artpe was able to become a hero!”

“Pffft.”

Artpe couldn't hold back his laughter when he heard those words.

“Yes. It would be hilarious if that happened.”

“Oh god. Please give guidance to this child's path!”

“Yeah yeah. I beg of you. ”

[You've earned the 'Hero' Class.]

“....uh?”

When he really became a hero, Artpe could no longer laugh.

Chapter 2 – I’m a Hero!? (2)

“Hoo…….”

He had mapped out a golden plan to bring about a tranquil future for himself, but his plan went awry from the start. All the fault lie in the fact that Artpe was chosen to be a hero. The future in front of him was a confusing and chaotic mess.

“Why me!”

“This is all very splendid, Artpe! Isn’t it!”

Maetel stuck close to him, and she was all smiles. On top of her head, Artpe could see words that could be only seen with his eyes.

[Name : Maetel]

[Race : Human Female]

[Title : Hero]

[Level : 1]

[Strength : 8, Agility : 12, Stamina : 11, Magic Energy : 10]

“No matter how I think about this, this doesn’t make any sense…”

That’s right.

This time around two heroes were chosen.

“I had faith that Artpe would become a hero. Artpe is smart!”

“I believed ‘you’ would be the only one to become a hero.”

This was what happened in his previous life!

Maybe this was the 1,000 year anniversary of creation of this world, and this was some kind of a massive event where two heroes were given instead of one!

Yes. The fact that there were two heroes meant that the probability of success in killing the Demon King had gone up. That

was a good thing.

Still, why did he have to be one of the heroes! The fact that he was the hero's childhood friend was already dangerous enough, yet now his situation had worsened!

"Please wait a moment. We'll contact the palace, and we'll take both of you to the capital"

"Palace! Are we really going to a palace!?"

"Yes. I'll be back soon."

"Yes!"

".....uh?"

Why were there two heroes? Why did he become a hero!

He wrapped his hands around his head as he faced the nightmare-like reality in front of him. When he raised his head, he discovered the priest in charge of the Baptism Ritual moving quickly towards the exit. The sight evoked an ominous feeling within him. Artpe narrowed his eyes as he asked Maetel a question.

"What did he just say?"

"He'll contact the palace, and we'll be taken to the capital!"

"The capital!?"

"Yes, the capital! It is a shiny city!"

Maetel's voice was filled with happiness and delight. She sounded super sweet. Artpe heard her overly sweet words, and it caused his expression to sour in real time!

In his previous life, he clearly remembered what happened to the hero when she went to the capital. He shouldn't be wallowing in despair as he stood by doing nothing! If they didn't get out of this situation, they will be ruined!

Artpe decided not to ruminate over his situation right now. He

could dwell on his own misfortune at a later time. The important thing right now....

They had to run away!

“Capital! Palace! Being a hero is really great!”

“You are completely mistaken. The palace isn’t as grand a place to be as you think.”

Why did humans treat heroes well? They wanted to trot out the heroes to face the Demon King. It didn’t matter if other humans gave them nice clothes and food. When the time came, they would push the two of them out into the streets. They would expect the heroes to kill the Demon King. Basically, the two of them were akin to domesticated pigs that would be fattened and eaten later.

“Well, let’s talk about the problem we face right now. ”

“Pork is too expensive to eat!”

“The quality of the fodder they are trying to feed us stinks! It is pathetic!”

Did she understand what Artpe was trying to convey? When she heard his words, her pupils shook for the first time. It was as if the world was about to fall on her head. She asked in a serious manner.

“Wa. The food at the palace isn’t tasty?”

“It is the worst.”

Artpe was firm with his words. It had already been several hundred years since the fight between a hero and a Demon King. Of course, the palace had a manual in regards to how to develop a hero. However, it was very outdated! It was trash! Even the common soldiers of the Demon Army would ridicule the manual if they saw it!

‘In truth, the hero’s development was delayed, because she followed their manual.’

Maetel’s potential was remarkable. In only a year, her level had

increased from level 200 to level 374. Even if the Demon King continued to provide a constant stream of fodder, her growth rate was unbelievable.

Such an amazing hero had lived in the palace for several years, yet her growth rate had been absurdly low. If the Demon King hadn't paid attention to her, she would have never reached the Demon King's castle!

Therefore, if the two heroes were dragged into the palace, the only thing waiting for them was a terrible loss! It would be game over for them!

"Humans are the biggest enemies of other humans. I want you to remember this, Maetel."

"Ah, all right. Humans are the biggest enemies of other humans... The food at the palace tastes bad...."

This was the moment when the hero realized humanity was her enemy.

"So what should we do, Artpe?"

"Don't worry about it. I thought of a way to nurture... I know how we'll develop ourselves. I know things are a bit messed up right now, but... Tsk. It can't be helped. Let's do this my way."

His original plan was to gather all the skills and magic in this world. He planned on giving it all to Maetel. However, he had also become a hero now. Their enemy didn't have a single target anymore. The target had split into two, and Artpe didn't want to die. This was why Artpe had no choice, but to come to this conclusion.

"From now on, you'll learn about weapons. I'll learn magic. The rest... We'll appropriately split it up between the two of us, and learn it."

"Yes!"

A hero was able to learn skills and magic from all Classes. This special characteristic made the Hero Class a cheat Class. Moreover, there were a good number of unique skills and special skills hidden around the world, and they could only be mastered by the hero Class.

Normally, it was foolish to learn magic and weapons at the same time. It slowed one's development in both fields. However, the hero had to swallow the bitter pill of learning both fields, since the hero was pushed to learn all the skills and special moves that could only be learned by the hero...

‘However, there are two heroes now.’

The most fundamental problem had been solved. The two of them could choose one's specialty field ahead of time. Each skill they gained could be maxed out. This would simplify their plan on how they would dispose the Demon King!

“....this is hogwash! Ooh-ahhhhhh! Why am I a hero!”

“Artpe. A hog doesn't wash itself!”

“Don't undercut me so coldly at a time like this!”

This wasn't his original plan! He planned on developing Maetel into a great hero, and he planned on eating the crumbs off the table from the back! He would have to fight the bone chillingly strong Demon King! Shit!

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhh. Please tell me this is all a dream!”

“This is really like a dream, Artpe. Artpe and I are heroes.... Together....”

Maetel's idiotic reaction didn't allow Artpe to escape from reality. If he dropped the ball, the Private A of the Demon King's army might be able to kill them! Artpe let out a big sigh as he flicked Maetel's forehead.

“Ouch.”

“You have to get ahold of yourself from now on. A hero becomes the center of attention for the humans, but at the same time, the hero becomes the target of every demon within the Demon race.”

“It’s all right. I’ll protect Artpe!”

“Yes. I like that you are courageous.”

He was a little bit late in realizing this, but.... This girl was a bit of an idiot.

How was she able to learn magic and healing spells? After much consideration, he realized Maetel had only used her sword in his previous life. He hadn’t seen her use anything else.

Even as he lost, he had thought the hero was acting cool when she held back from using any magic. However, Artpe was mistaken. The hero had been an idiot, and she hadn’t been able to handle any difficult magic!

“Eh-whew. Maybe this is for the best. It seems the gods are pretty smart.”

It was said a diamond on a dunghill is still a diamond. Artpe had the experience of living as a Demon, so he was more adept at manipulating magic compared to most humans. He was made into being a hero, and at the very least, he was better at using magic than Maetel. This meant their chances of beating the Demon King had gone up.

If he didn’t have this idea to cling onto, his stomach would be churning from pain.

“I reincarnated for nothing…….”

“Huh? Reincarnated?”

“It’s nothing. Let’s get ready to escape.”

“Escape?”

When Maetel made a retort, Artpe didn’t say anything. He just pointed out the window.

“Artpe! Let’s talk for a little bit!”

“We gave you bread yesterday!”

“I have an item left behind by your father, Maetel! Why don’t you come out here for a brief moment.?”

This was a hut where Artpe lived by himself. This was no where near the center of the village, yet the people of the village were all gathered in front of his hut. It was a scary sight.

“Ah. He said my father left an item behind! I’ll be right back.”

“They are liars. Stay by my side.”

“Yes!”

Artpe stopped Maetel from getting up. She almost fell for the most basic trick. He let out a sigh. He would have to turn away the people, and he would have to escape the village with Maetel. His immediate future looked bleak. At that moment, Maetel’s naive voice asked a question.

“So why are so many people gathered outside? Normally, they are very chilly towards Artpe and I.”

“Since we are heroes, they probably want to create a tie with us at all cost. Still, they are only level 1 starter village people ABCD.”

Artpe was an orphan of unknown origin. Maetel had lost her mother when she was young, and her father was a traveling merchant.

The villagers weren’t heartless enough to let the two die. They helped the children get by, but they were considered to be a drain on their resources. This was why the villagers had treated them as if they were undesirables.

However, the two of them had suddenly become heroes!

Until now, the people of this village had treated them poorly, and those memories were flashing through their minds. This was why they had all gathered here to leave a positive memory behind in

the two children's minds.

"If they had something useful, I would take it, but...."

There was no hidden treasure or skill in this village. He had checked with his Read All Creation ability.

Basically, he had nothing to gain from the villagers. This town had no special characteristics aside the fact that the heroes were born here. This was basically a quintessential starter's village!

"Nothing good will come from getting involved with them. Even if we received and completed a request, they probably would give us some grass as a reward."

"I'm good at eating grass. When I was young, father taught me which grass I could eat."

"I'm not going to eat grass. I'm not a cow. Are you a cow?"

"No!"

"Then you shouldn't eat it from now on."

"Yes!"

He didn't care about the worries of the villagers. They didn't interest Artpe. The fact that he was a hero now was annoying, so he didn't feel the need to get involved in other people's business! The only things he needed was money, level, skills and spells!

"This is why we have to run away. If we stay put, we might be dragged away to the castle."

"I also don't want food that tastes bad!"

Maetel let out an energetic shout as if she agreed with Artpe. However, she soon asked a question in low spirits.

"If father comes back to find me missing, he'll be sad. If I go stay at the castle, I can contact him. I can't do that if I go with you."

"You are sharp in regards to some topics.... Well... Mmmm."

At this point in time, Maetel's father had died in a remote part of

the continent. Artpe had been in charge of investigating her, so he was sure of it.

However, he couldn't just tell her that her father was dead, because it was so in his previous life! Artpe's existence might have changed Maetel's father's fate, but that possibility was very low. However, he didn't feel the need to attack Maetel mentally at this point in time.

This was why he made up a reasonable-sounding excuse.

"We'll leave behind a letter. Your father knows that you are close with me. He'll probably come looking for you at this hut."

"Artpe. I know how to read letters, but I don't know how to write...."

"It's all right. I know human...I know how to read and write the Kingdom Language."

"That's amazing!"

When Artpe raised his right hand, a blue light appeared at the end of his index finger. This couldn't be called magic. It was the most basic mana technique called Mana Manifestation. It was possible to engrave letters into the wood using the hot mana. Maetel's eyes became brighter. Artpe grinned as he confirmed something with her.

"Does your father know the Kingdom Language?"

"Of course!"

"All right, hero. Do you have anything you want to tell your father?"

"Yes, I do! So...."

Artpe transcribed all of Maetel's words on the wall of the hut. He let out a sigh as he stepped back. He thought this was pointless, but if he could keep her morale up, it was worth it.

'I've gone through the trouble of doing this. You should come

back alive, and search this hut out.'

He grumbled as he gave his wish, and he grabbed Maetel's hand.

Kyahh!

Maetel let out a bashful sound, but he ignored it.

"Let's run away."

"Y...yes!"

"Aht, Artpe!"

"Maetel!"

The two of them charged out of the hut's door in an energetic manner. The villagers rushed forward. Artpe didn't know when the priest would be coming back, so he didn't have the time to deal with the villagers. Artpe chose the weakest looking villager. He glared at the Villager D as he spoke.

"We have to go to the restroom."

"I...I'm sorry."

Village person D backed off. Villager A, B, C and E followed D's example as they also backed off!

This was the moment he had been waiting for. He ran as he pulled Maetel behind him. Villager D looked at the children's back. It seemed the two of them really had to go to the restroom.

However, the two children was never seen again. They didn't return to the village.

The heroes succeeded in running away.

Chapter 3 – I’m a Hero!? (3)

“The human body is weak.”

Artpe had a new revelation. The price of this new revelation was a scrape on his knee.

“Artpe was always bad at running. Eh-whew. I knew you were running too hard.”

The priest was probably back after contacting the palace. The priest would immediately try to find them, so they had to be far away as possible. However, Artpe couldn’t run properly, since he suffered an injury. This was why Maetel was helping him walk. He was slowing down the hero. If he was still one of the Four Heavenly Kings, he would have considered his own actions to be a meritorious deed!

“This isn’t the time to.....”

“Artpe?”

Artpe had extended threads of Mana from his body, and his face crumpled when he felt a vibration through the threads. There were beings born from a spring of evil nearby. Basically, monsters were nearby..

There were three of them. These monsters were living in a forest near humans, who weren’t very vigilant. As expected of monsters living in such a region, they were naturally occurring level 3 goblins. These were monsters that always showed up in stories that had heroes, knights or magicians as main characters. The main characters always defeat these monsters in the most miserable way possible for the monsters. They were the monsters of misfortune, who bowed out early from the story.

Of course, even if the goblins were very weak, Artpe and Maetel had just left their town. They were mere level 1s, so the goblins were stronger than them. If Artpe and Maetel had moved through

the normal route, they would have faced slimes or creatures weaker than squirrels. They could have raised their levels by hunting them instead of facing goblins!

‘Fortunately, I dispersed my threads of Mana. Of course, it would have been better if I possessed Search or Barrier type magic!’

Level was everything in this world. If one had low level, one was low on Mana. There were restrictions placed on Skills and Spells, because one’s soul was of low quality. One could attack an enemy’s weak spot using a Sliding Tackle skill, which was sharper than an attack with a knife, yet one would have a hard time delivering a critical hit. On top of that, one wouldn’t be able to equip oneself with good equipments!

“Maetel. You should stop helping me, and....”

“Huh? I can feel a strange energy.”

Artpe had been about to warn Maetel, but she mumbled to herself before he could. Her pretty face frowned.

Artpe could see Maetel’s ability change in real time.

[Maetel]

[Level 1]

[Detection Lv1]

“I can feel it more clearly now, Artpe. I’m pretty sure there are beings coming towards us.”

“.....ah, yes. I was about to tell you the same thing. ”

Of course, there were also geniuses, who learned high quality Skills, irrespective of their levels. This was what had happened to the blonde haired girl in front of him! She was a damned genius!

He let out a string of curses in a low voice, and he decided to look at this in a positive light. His only ally was a genius.

“They are goblins. They are all level 3. If it’s a one on one battle,

it might be a fair fight. However, there are three of them.”

“Don’t worry. I’ll protect Artpe.”

Her words were very heroic!

However, she was wearing shabby clothes. It probably had a Defense of 0. It might even have a negative defense by the look of it. She had no other equipments. The girl spoke such words, while she clenched her dirty hands into a fist. It amplified the worry he felt.

“Still, you can’t fight them with empty hands. It is unreasonable, so please be patient.”

“Yes.”

Artpe let go of Maetel’s helping hands. He limped around as he quickly searched his surrounding. He could see the composition of the world, and the information was pouring in through his eyes. He concentrated his efforts in finding the most sharp or hard item he could find. Fortunately, his efforts were immediately rewarded.

“Hoo. This should be fine.”

[Burning Branch]

[A trace amount of naturally occurring Mana has hardened the fibers and bark of the branch. It has the potential to be used as a burning weapon. It’ll break after several swings.]

Sometimes there were artifacts that were naturally formed in nature. It was ungainly compared to a crafted weapon, but it was good enough to be used as a stopgap weapon. He put the item into Maetel’s hands as he spoke.

“Two is coming diagonally from the left, so you should guard that side.”

“Huh? This branch feels a bit strange. I can feel a hot, yet comfortable feeling from it.”

“What?”

Artpe observed Maetel. Sure enough, he saw the newly updated information.

[Maetel]

[Level – 1]

[Mana Sensitivity Lv1]

“...yes. I see.”

“I don’t know what just happened, but was it something good?”

“Of course. This is the attainment of a warrior.”

This wasn’t something a normal warrior could gain. This was the attainment of a high rank warrior! Artpe didn’t know how many skills she could awaken by herself. He decided not to be surprised from now on. He picked up an ordinary rock, and he turned around.

His knee was aching, but he ignored the pain. He focused on imbuing Mana into the rock. The only thing he could do right now was to manipulate his Mana.

Mana was basically pure energy. When he imbued his Mana into this very plain rock, it would become a useful weapon that he could throw once.

Fortunately, Artpe had a ridiculous amount of Mana considering he was level 1.... There was so much that he wondered if his status as a hero had a causal effect. He had put in enough Mana to fill the rock, yet he still had plenty left.

The rock was filled with magic, and it started to emit a blue light. If he left it be, the Mana would slowly bleed out. However, if he threw it, it would cause a weak explosion. It was enough to kill a level 3 goblin.

“Artpe?”

“I told you there were three, right? Don’t worry about the one coming towards us from our rear. You just focus on the ones

coming from the front.”

“You even know where the monsters are coming from. Artpe is amazing!”

“Look towards the front.”

“Yes!”

If one of the bastards had a long distance weapon, they would have to run away. However, this was a forest in the boondocks. This was a novice zone where goblins weren’t allowed to hold any advanced weapons.

As expected, it didn’t take too long for a laughing goblin to push through the brush. The goblins weren’t equipped better than them. They just had sturdy looking clubs.

[Goo-heh-heh. You guys look tasty! Guehk!]

“Die!”

There was no way he would allow a level 3 small fish pontificate in front of him! When the goblin assigned to Artpe came into range, he quickly threw the rock. The rock flew true, and the goblin’s head exploded. The goblin fell over backwards. It was a one shot kill.

[Kee...kee-eek!?!]

[Weak humans!?!]

“Hyahhhhhp!”

When their comrade in charge of the ambush died in such a preposterous manner, the goblins were taken aback! At that moment, the hero charged. Unlike her title as a hero, she had used a cowardly tactic by waiting for an opening!

“I feel as if everything will work out if I swing this!”

“Countless gamblers ruined themselves by trusting their instincts!”

“Hoo-ahhhhhhp!”

[Ggoo-ehhhhhhk!]

However, unlike Artpe worries, the wooden branch swung by Maetel fell with exquisite strength and speed. It impacted on the goblin’s arm. The goblin dropped it club, and it fell over as it screamed in pain.

A level 3 monster was defeated by a level 1 hero! This was shameful; event for the entire race of goblins.

[Maetel]

[Level – 1]

[Swordsmanship Lv1]

“Artpe. Somehow I feel stronger!”

“Ah. I know. ”

Until now, Maetel had only swung a branch during her roleplay as a hero. She didn’t have any real battle experience, yet she learned swordsmanship so easily.

Still, Swordsmanship wasn’t as impressive as the Mana Sensitivity!

Artpe gave an apathetic reply as he picked up another rock.

From just one swing of the branch, Maetel had earned courage and skill. She bravely attacked the remaining goblin.

“Scary monsters! Don’t torment Artpe!”

[Kwahhhhk. It is a scary human! Ggoo-ehhhhk!]

This strike was much stronger than before. She was only a level 1, yet she possessed Mana Sensitivity. Maetel instinctively brought out the heat from within the wooden branch. She burned the goblin’s club, and she hit the goblin’s head square in the head!

The goblin couldn’t resist against the terrible pain, and it died.

It was hard to tell which one was the scary monster!

[Maetel]

[Level 2]

[Mana Control Lv1]

“Ooh. Oooh.”

When the fire was brought out from the wooden branch, it consumed all the mana contained within the branch. It turned into ash in Maetel’s hand, and the ash was dispersed by the wind. Somehow, it was a sad sight for her.

“I really killed them.”

It was as if Maetel had poured out all her energy. She sat in place as she looked down at her hands.

It was a very short fight, but she had never experienced something so powerful. She had went back and forth between the boundaries of life and death. She had ended lives with her hands! She wouldn’t be able to forget this shock easily.

Artpe also knew what she was going through. He understood it.

However...

“Artpe. I.... I won?”

“No.”

Artpe gave a cold reply, and he threw the rock he had pick up a moment ago. In a short amount of time, the rock had taken in a lot of Artpe’s Mana. The rock brushed near Maetel as it flew by like the wind. Before it could swing its club towards Maetel, the goblin’s head exploded.

Maetel saw the goblin’s body stumble to the ground. She finally became aware of its presence.

“Kyahhhhk!”

“You haven’t won until all your enemies are killed. You should

keep that in mind.”

“....I forgot.”

The goblin she attacked first had only suffered a broken arm from her first strike. It had dropped its club, yet it had remained alive. Maetel had forgotten about the first goblin when she faced the other goblin. On top of that, she had been intoxicated by the fact that she had killed a goblin. The battle hadn't ended, yet she had been out of it!

Maetel was looking at Artpe blankly. He spoke icily towards her.

“Wake up, Maetel. We are no longer children, who live within the fences of a village.”

“Artpe.....”

Other 12 year old girls could act like this right now, but a hero didn't have that luxury. Even if Maetel's goodwill towards him decreased, he wanted her to have a mean streak.

The hero in his previous life was too soft.

She had been softer than a cheese matured for half a year! Instead of giving her a curriculum for the gifted, he needed to make a hero, who was cold and spiteful!

“....is too cool.”

“Huh?”

However, his intentions was off by a little bit. Maetel's cheeks were flushed as she ran towards Artpe. She grabbed both his hands, and she started yelling excitedly as she jumped around.

“Artpe is too cool! You really are like a hero!”

“You are the hero! Ah, I guess I'm also a hero now.!”

Even as he said it, his words gave him goosebumps. Artpe couldn't think of anyone else in this world, who was as unsuitable for the role of hero as him! On the other hand, it seemed Maetel

viewed Artpe as a cool hero.

“I want to be like Artpe!”

“No, you won’t.”

Artpe spoke with a serious face. Maetel’s spirit was finally dampened a little bit.

“Anyways, you should never put down your guard until all your enemies are dead. Even fallen enemies should be checked. I want you to double check even if the enemy’s throat was cut. Do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand. I’ll bear it in mind!.... So the enemy doesn’t die even if its throat is cut?”

Artpe clicked his tongue at Maetel’s naive question. It wouldn’t be called a monster if it died so easily!

“I’m not sure about these small fishes, but later on, there are bastards, who survive, even after being cut into 17 pieces. The criteria for finding out if a monster is dead is to use Mana.”

“Mana?”

“You’ve handled Mana not too long ago, and you’ve also acquired skills... I’ll teach it to you slowly.”

“Yes!”

“However, there is something else I have to teach you first.”

Artpe approached a dead goblin, and he tapped the corpse. Suddenly, a yellow coin fell from its body. When she saw this, Maetel’s eyes turned round.

“Why do monsters have money!?”

“That is a very good question.”

Artpe kicked the remaining two goblins, and he picked up the coins. He let out a fresh smile as he spoke.

“I don’t know the answer either!”

This was the moment when the hero learned of Looting.

Chapter 4 – I’m a Hero!? (4)

“Stay still, Artpe.”

“Hey. Stop right there. Don’t come over here. Hey, hey!”

Artpe was facing the biggest threat of his lifetime. The identity of this threat was a paste made from a handful of grass. She held it in her hand.

“You’ll get better soon if I can put this on you.”

“Stop lying! There is no way I’ll get better by applying such a dirty.... Ah.”

[Maetel]

[Level – 2]

[Medicine Lv4]

[Care Grass]

[The grass works against all types of wounds, but its effects are weak. If the grass is made into a paste by combining liquid, its recuperative power is increased slightly.]

Maybe it could really heal his wound.

When that thought ran through his mind, Artpe immediately calmed down. This was his mistake. Unlike the previous incarnation of herself, the current hero had learned how to attack an opening. In a flash, she darted in, and she put the grass paste on his knee!

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhk!”

“Just be still and get treated by me!”

“Ooh-ahhhh... It really is getting better!”

She hadn’t put much effort into searching through the thicket. After she pulled out the grass, she spat on it before mushing it.

The pain disappeared in a flash after the paste was applied!

Artpe was taken aback by this unexpected aptitude the hero possessed. She preened as she stuck out her still flat chest.

“My dad taught me about the different types of grasses. There are grasses you can eat, and of course, there are the ones that can treat wounds. There are even a grass that can recover your energy. He also taught me about which grasses are dangerous to eat.”

“I ignored you when you said you ate grass before, but now it sounds as if your words were predictive....”

“Let’s rest for a little bit until the medicine soaks in. Ah. Before we do that....”

Maetel found a patch of grass nearby, and she pulled out the wide leaved grasses. She wiped it off on her sleeve. Then she wrapped the wide leaves around the wound administered with the paste. She tied it loosely.

She had looked fiendish when fighting the goblins, but in this light, she showed her feminine side. If he was a normal boy, he would have fallen for her at this point in time. Of course, Artpe was able to sidestep this issue. The number one cause of death for the Four Heavenly Kings had been honey traps. He was well-informed regarding this issue, so his heart didn’t beat faster at all.

“Oopsy daisy. It’s all done.”

“.....thank you.”

“This is nothing compared to what Artpe has done for me!”

Maetel had a big smile on her face as she sat next to Artpe. After the battle with the goblins had ended, they had decided to recover from the fatigue caused by their first battle. They rested on top of a big boulder that was nearby.

“What I did for you.....”

Artpe felt guilty at Maetel’s words, so he let out a bitter laugh.

Truthfully, he had mixed feelings about all of this. Was he really the same person as the version of himself, who had grown up with Maetel? Why did Artpe have no memory of the time before he regained his memories?

“Are you tired, Artpe? I’ll let you use my lap as a pillow. Why don’t you sleep even if it is for a brief time?”

“...no.”

Artpe faced the angelic and kind face of Maetel. He felt awkward facing her, so he surreptitiously turned his gaze towards the sky. The glow of the setting sun was slowly spreading across the sky.

They didn’t have any time to waste.

“My wound is fine. Let’s get up now. It’ll be extremely cold and dark once the night comes.”

“What should we do?”

The two heroes were still too young and weak. It was risky for them to spend the whole night within the forest. Be that as it may, they couldn’t just blindly go back to the town.

What would be their best option right now?

Artpe let out a gentle laugh as he revealed the answer.

“We can go into a Dungeon.”

“...what?”

Maetel answered back with a question.

For the first time, since he was reincarnated, Artpe spoke words worthy of a hero.

“I’m saying we should go clear a Dungeon!”

Dungeons were a scary place where it was teeming with monsters and traps. However, at the end of the Dungeons, there was always the prospect of acquiring sweet rewards. This was why adventurers were lured into the Dungeons. Some called the

Dungeons as being a gift from the gods. Others called it the temptation from the devil. There were even some, who called it was a prank pulled off by the Demon King.

“I like to refer to Dungeons as being rich mines.”

“Artpe is amazing!”

It was unbelievably hard to find rewards within the Dungeons.

There were cases where one was able to avoid all the traps, but when one reached the last room, it was revealed that the treasure was hidden in one of the traps one had already passed. There were times when the last boss was killed, but it was revealed that the last boss was the treasure. Then there were cases where the last boss didn't turn out to be the actual boss. The adventurer was awakened, in the course of fight monster, to become the last boss by being inflicted by poisons and curses. The world was overflowing with such stories!

At this point, it was clear that a god's nature could be as twisted as the Demon King.

Or were they the two sides of the same coin?

On the other hand, Artpe possessed the Read All Creation ability. He could pierce through all lies to see the truths. Nothing could deceive Artpe's eyes. Artpe's possessed an ability that would allow him to find all the hidden Dungeons, and it wouldn't be difficult for him to acquire the hidden treasures within the Dungeons!

‘Of course, in my previous life, I used this amazing ability for the benefit of the Demon King....’

Just the thought of that point made Artpe grind his teeth. If he had been able to take just a 20 percent cut of what he earned from those countless Dungeons, he would have been able to take care of 30 generations of his descendants!

“It'll be different this time around. All right. I'm going to work a little bit harder, so I can enjoy a peaceful life as a dairy farmer.”

“I’m not sure what you are talking about, but let’s both work harder!”

Artpe knew about a Dungeon near the village where the hero was born. To be precise, there was exactly one Dungeon inside the forest near the country village. It was fitting, since that village had nothing.

From the start, he had thought about visiting this Dungeon, while they were running away. This was why they had been heading in this direction from the moment they came out of the village. It was going as planned. The Dungeon appeared not much later.

“...is it here?”

“Yes.”

When Maetel saw the entrance to the Dungeon, she had an odd expression on her face.

“Do we have to go into such a strange place? Isn’t this a burial ground?”

“All Dungeon entrances are like this. It was as if all the makers of Dungeons made a friendly agreement by losing their collective minds.”

Aside from burial grounds, there were several thousand year old trees, natural lakes formed within a cave and a ruined house inside a town. These were the popular spots for Dungeons.

These were very obvious and suspicious locations. However, these spots weren’t investigated unless the hero or Artpe discovered it. He had always wondered why it was like that. However, that issue didn’t matter now.

“I don’t want to go in there.... My dad said we shouldn’t disturb the rest of the dead.”

“Your father did a very good job in educating you.”

Up until now, Maetel had meekly followed Artpe's words. This was the first time she had pushed back. Well, it was true that the hero from his past life never visited this Dungeon either.

After being chosen as a hero, she had been dragged immediately into the palace. She might have always had an aversion to burial grounds, but that didn't matter any more. There was only one important fact right now. She 'must' go into this Dungeon.

This was why Artpe spoke with a stern voice.

"If we don't go in here, we'll be dragged back into the palace."

"I like tasteless food even less! I also don't like the cold. Woo, woo...."

"Well, are you going to go in?"

"...yes."

The sun had set all the way, and their surrounding was getting colder. They didn't have the time to dawdle. Maetel looked as if she was about to cry, but she followed Artpe. She had no choice, but to enter the Dungeon.

"Huh?"

However, when he actually entered the Dungeon, Maetel tilted her head in confusion.

"This isn't a grave?"

Maetel had expected to see a coffin with a dead body within. She had expected cold brick walls with hidden bats and long spiderwebs. The sight that greeted them was a square room, and the floor was covered with brown soil.

When she turned around, she saw the stairway heading outside. Maetel was sure she had descended stone steps, yet unbeknownst to her, it had changed into stairs made out of dirt!

"Artpe, Artpe!"

Maetel's eyes turned round, and she grabbed Artpe's dirty sleeve. He had somewhat expected such a reaction from Maetel. Artpe smirked.

"Dungeons are all like this. So what do you think? Are you still cold?"

"No, I'm not cold at all.... Huh? Why is that?"

When the hero realized the abnormal condition around her, she became slightly confused!

Artpe gave a short explanation to her.

"Dungeons are a form of pocket dimensions. You should think of it as a space disengaged from the outside world."

"What is a pocket dimension?"

"The concept of a pocket dimension was first introduced in the year 728 according to the Continent Calendar. A demon named 'Nanarai Bodra' set up an experiment where the density of Mana within a limited space was pushed past the maximum permissible amount...."

"It's over my head!"

Maetel raised one hand, and she yelled out in a spirited manner. Artpe had already expected such a reaction from her. He let out a benevolent smile as he asked her a question.

"Which part don't you understand?"

"There's too much... You should explain what the Continent Calendar is first."

"All right. Let's lay that aside for now."

Artpe gave up on giving her an explanation. He was the one at fault for trying to explain a concept of magic to an idiot.

"Just accept that such places exists, and the Dungeons occupies that space."

“Yes. All right!”

If she was going to gloss over everything, she shouldn't have asked for an explanation!

“We'll sleep here today. Since we are at the Dungeon entrance, the monsters won't come near here. Moreover, no one will be able to find and enter this Dungeon. We can relax and sleep.”

“Yes. All right.”

He had said those words, but he prepared for the unexpected. He used his fingers to spread several threads of Mana over the Dungeon's entrance, stairway and the doorway located on the other side of the room. It would allow him to be aware of external threats beforehand, and it would give him some time to prepare for it. This was supposed to be an impossible task for a normal level 2 hero, but Artpe was able to pull it off.

Maetel watched Artpe work. Her eyes were shining relentlessly.

“Artpe is really incredible. There isn't a thing you don't know. You are great at everything except exercise. You are kind.... Moreover, you are a hero!”

“You are a hero too.”

“I... I like being a hero, but in truth, I wouldn't have minded if I hadn't become a hero.”

Artpe finally remembered the words spoken by Maetel in the morning. She most definitely said there was something she wanted to be more than being a hero.

She had role played at being a hero everyday. He knew she loved being a hero. So what was she referring to when she said there was something she wanted more than being a hero?

Artpe mused over it when he turned to look at Maetel in alarm.

“Did you perhaps want to become the Demon King instead of a hero!?”

“No way!”

“You should most definitely not become one of the Four Heavenly Kings. It isn’t worth it.”

“I’m not talking about that!”

Maetel’s face had turned red as she fumed. Her anger pretty much wiped away the fear she felt for the Dungeon and the future. Artpe smiled for the first time, and he gently patted her head.

“I already know, you dummy. Whatever you want to be, you should keep it safe within your heart. When the Demon King is dead, you’ll be free.”

“Free....?”

A hero only existed, because there was a Demon King in existence. When the Demon King disappears, the Hero Class would vanish too.

Then the hero would be able to acquire a new Class.

“That day will come, so you should safeguard your dream. You shouldn’t forget about it. I will help you achieve it.”

“Dream... Do you really think I’ll be able to fulfil my dream?”

“Of course.”

He didn’t know what her dreams was. However, the dream was probably something she can realize after the death of the Demon King. Artpe nodded his head vigorously, and Maetel’s face visibly brightened.

“All right. I’ll try harder from now on! I’ll do whatever it takes!”

“Yes. Anyways, it is time for us to sleep.”

“Yes! Sleep well, Artpe!”

“You sleep well too.”

He had succeeded in motivating the hero.

Now she would be an active participant in moving forward!

Artpe let out a pleased smile. He was able to turn the tide of Maetel reluctance, and his plan was on track now.

His expression was akin to a farmer waiting for his harvest.

If he knew what Maetel was dreaming about, Artpe wouldn't have been able to make such a contented expression. He had always been the lowest ranked of the Four Heavenly Kings, because he had a habit of not catching the important developments.

This was how the two heroes slept safely within the Dungeon on their first night out.

Chapter 5 – Dungeon with Death (1)

On the next day, the two of them were able to safely open their eyes. Artpe had been inwardly worried about a highly skilled adventurer or a thief, who could neutralize his perception, catching them by surprise. However, a refreshing morning arrived without the need for Artpe to use his contingency plan 1, 2, 3 and 4. Of course, they were in a Dungeon, so they couldn't check whether it was light outside!

“Good morning, Artpe!”

“I don't know if it is morning yet, and I also don't know if it is a good one, but hello.”

When Maetel opened her eyes, she had confirmed that Artpe was sleeping safely next to her. She let out a bright smile before she took stock of herself. Her eyes widened in surprise.

“Wow. We slept on floor, yet my body feels really great.”

“The Mana inside a Dungeon is extremely active. It has a positive effect on one's vitals. However, we aren't the only living being in this place, and that is a problem.”

Most monster, who entered a Dungeon, became much stronger. Of course, this increased the EXP one could gain. Still, it was scary to face these fortified monsters. This was why most adventurers and mercenaries was reluctant to enter a Dungeon. In truth, if one wanted to live a long life, it was best not to enter a Dungeon.

“Is this why you insisted on entering the Dungeon? Since we've slept and refreshed ourselves, can't we just head out?”

“We could. However, the soldiers dispatched from the palace would have expanded their search radius by now. If we go out right now, we'll be caught. We'll be dragged back into the palace.”

“I don't like tasteless food!”

She could deal with wearing shoddy clothes, and not being able to sleep. However, she wanted to avoid not being able eat good food at all cost. There were tears in Maetel's eyes as she shouted those words. Artpe nodded his head in satisfactions, and he handed her the leather waterskin.

“All right. After we drink some water, let's work hard to catch the monsters in here. By the time we are able to go out again, we'll be stronger. When we exit the Dungeon, we'll be able to easily evade the soldiers pursuing us.”

This was the cheapest part about being a hero. Maetel had been a normal child only a day ago. Before she became a hero, she had merely been the leader of a group of children, who she played with. If things continued as they were progressing right now, she would be more skillful than the soldiers that were being killed like flies in the current war. She would be able to look down upon them!

There was a common saying within the Demon world. Yesterday's defeated hero will kill you tomorrow. Of course, the idiots within the Demon world ignored this saying, and they were killed and looted by the hero like clock-work. The biggest problem was the chef...

The Demon King was the biggest idiot amongst them!

“Do we have to fight those weird goblins again, Artpe?”

“No, we'll be fighting something much weirder. They are also stronger.”

“Heeek!”

When she thought about the fight against the goblins yesterday, she shrank into herself.

However, Artpe had seen her remarkably learn four skills at once in yesterday's battle. He thought about how she looked yesterday, and he gravely nodded his head.

“You are capable of fighting opponents that are 10 levels above you. If you aren’t careless, you’ll be able to win easily, so don’t worry too much about it. I’m also capable to a certain extent.”

He most definitely felt the difference in yesterday’s battle with the goblins. When Artpe was part of the Demon race, it didn’t matter how great an ability he had possessed. He had a hard time distinguishing himself with his limited talent. Now he was born as a human, and he had acquired the Hero Class. His situation had changed drastically.

“In the Demon world, there are no weak monsters like this.....”

“You even know about the Demon world. Artpe is amazing.!”

“I read about it from a book...a book.”

The monsters from the Demon world were inherently outstanding at Mana detection, and they possessed a high Mana resistance. If one manifested Mana to attack those types of monsters, it wouldn’t work. Yesterday, Artpe had infused a portion of his Mana into a rock, and he had thrown it. He also used threads of Mana to detect the approach of his enemies. These methods would have never work against the monsters from the Demon world.

However, he was in the realm of the humans now. There were countless monsters here that could be killed using such simple methods. He didn’t have to level up, and acquire proper magic spells. Any magic spells that dealt with direct manipulation of magic could be mimicked with his control over Mana. He would be able to create a similar effect!

“Wow. Can all magicians do that?”

“They can, but they don’t bother using it.”

The reason being it looked cooler to chant a spell, and the destructive power one could inflict was higher with a spell. Of course, these weren’t the only reasons why Mana manipulation

wasn't used by others. If Artpe didn't have his Innate Ability, Read All Creation, he wouldn't be able to figure out his opponent's tendencies ahead of time. He wouldn't be able to properly respond with his Mana.

Artpe hadn't really given a detailed explanation about his Innate Ability to Maetel. Despite that fact, she passively accepted everything he said by saying, 'Artpe is amazing!' This was why there was no need to give a more thorough explanation. If he said it, she believed it!

"It is scary, but I'll do my best, Artpe!"

"Before we do anything..."

"Huh?"

While Maetel was tilting her head in confusion, Artpe unhesitatingly strode towards the bottom step of the stairway connected to the entrance to the Dungeon. He gathered Mana into his hand.

"Is there a monster there, Artpe!?"

"No."

Artpe's hand knocked on the riser of the bottom step. The stair reacted to the Mana, and it opened up like a drawer. A large wooden box appeared. Maetel's eyes turned round. Artpe had a delighted expression on his face. He laughed as he turned to look at Maetel.

"However, there is a treasure box here."

"Artpe is really amazing!"

"Yes, I'm amazing."

As always, Artpe didn't stop Maetel from giving him praise.

In the past, this single ability allowed him to rise to the seat of the Four Heavenly Kings! Artpe was feeling good, so he decided to be a little bit more kind in his explanation.

“Most Dungeons have something called a Starter Set. These are for the fugitives, who were chased into the Dungeons, without knowing anything about the Dungeons. However, these people are being chased. They don’t have the luxury to search for secret locations.”

“Still, if they are lucky, they might be able to find it. So who made these preparations? I’m sure it was a kind person, who doesn’t want unsuspecting people to die within the Dungeons.”

“Kind person?”

Artpe grinned. The hero’s way of thinking was still too soft. She was soft like a warm pudding that was freshly made!

“The beginner’s equipment isn’t called beginner’s equipment for nothing. It’ll break after couple swings. There is nothing here that can be used for the duration of couple days. On top of that, it is very difficult to acquire additional equipments in the Dungeon unless one is experienced in traversing such Dungeons. Usually, the people, who were lucky enough to find the beginner’s equipment, are more likely to enter the Dungeon in high spirits. It gives them a false sense of confidence. This is the reason why most of them die.”

“D...does that apply to us!”

“It doesn’t, because we are heroes.”

“I see!”

Artpe gave another explanation, and Maetel once again accepted that explanation.

This is why it is easy to have a dummy by one’s side!

“First, let’s equip you with all of this. This rusted steel sword will break after swing it exactly 186 times. Ah, that number decreases by half if you imbue it with mana, hit a monster with a level difference of five or hit a monster’s bone. You have to be careful. Moreover, this leather armor is useless if you take a hit from a

monster with a level difference of 3. Otherwise, it can survive 20 cuts from the monsters before it becomes useless.”

“All right. I’ll be careful.!”

Artpe had given a pretty detailed instruction, yet she readily nodded her head. Of course, there was no way she was able to remember all the details. However, she simplified it in her head as ‘I have to avoid being hit, and I have to kill them with the least number of swings as possible!’

“Huh? Aren’t there any weapons here that Artpe can use?”

“There is no god in this world that would think a magician would come into a beginner’s Dungeon like this one.”

Artpe used Mana so naturally that it was easy to forget that there were very few number of magicians in the human world. First, one had to be born with the constitution for magic. Secondly, one had to be smart. Thirdly, one needed an environment where there’s a specialized school, who helped a young magician in dealing with Mana. A very small number of people possessed all three requirements.

“Artpe is really really amazing.....”

“I know. I know.”

In the box, there were two daggers, three emergency potions and a little bit of ration. Artpe put the potions and ration into a bag. Then he equipped the daggers on his waist.

“Artpe knows how to use daggers?”

“I know how to throw them.”

Artpe had an exceptional talent of being able to find hidden stuff. He was also very talented at hitting targets with whatever he threw. In the past, he had grown up in the Demon world with nothing to his name. He didn’t have the money to buy proper weapons or magic scrolls.

Before he caught the eyes of the Demon King, he had to manipulate Mana directly or he had to infuse Mana into objects to fight. He had used these tactics to defeat threats to himself.

He had already mentioned this before, but his tactics didn't work well against monsters in the Demon world. This was why Artpe's childhood had been very difficult. Even now his eyes teared up just from thinking about that period in his life.

“The only thing left now.... All weapons differ in weight and balance. If you swing the sword thinking it is the same as the wooden branch you swung yesterday, you might be killed before you can say ‘ah’. You should swing it about couple times to get a feel for it....”

Artpe was going through his ‘Fifty reasons why beginner adventurers die’ speech. He talked about information that was so obvious that people overlooked it. At that moment, Maetel swung the sword through the air, and she let out a bright smile as she let out a shout.

“Mmm, mmm. This will do! Weapons with edges are very scary!”

[Maetel]

[Level : 2]

[Swordsmanship Lv3]

“Ah, yes.”

He had been trying to give advice to a hero. It was basically akin to a little kid trying to lecture a court magician after reading a single tome of magic. After Artpe had this epiphany, he stepped forward. The hero grabbed him in surprise.

“You said there are monsters here!?”

“There should be none in front of us. I'll be able to perceive everything.”

Normal monsters appeared in the beginner's Dungeon, and the

monsters couldn't avoid his detection when he used the Mana threads. He was about to take another step with a leisurely smile on his face. However, he took a step backwards as his expression stiffened.

“....I guess not.”

In the first room of the Dungeon, an Elite Monster was waiting near the exit. The Elite Monster was positioned perfectly. It was poised to take off the head of the adventurer trying to exit the first room. If Artpe didn't have his Read All Creation ability, he would have suffered the same fate as a regular adventurer!

“Why's there a monster of that caliber inside the 1st room on the 1st floor of a beginner's Dungeon!”

“There are strong monsters in there?”

“There's a level 10 Elite Zombie inside. It possesses a Stealth ability, and the Critical Hit Skill. It is the ideal monster to kill low level adventurers.”

“Level 10?”

It was seven levels higher than the goblins they faced yesterday. However, the concept of levels was foreign to Maetel. She didn't have a point of reference for levels, so she had no idea how much stronger the monster was than her. She tilted her head in puzzlement.

“It is hard to feel the difference at the low levels, but the difference in levels represents the absolute power gap. Normally, one shouldn't attack an opponent if there is a level gap of 5 levels.”

“Then we should run away immediately!”

“There was a king, who thought similarly. That bastard waged a war, but he failed spectacularly.”

“Who is it?”

“The Demon world's greatest chef.”

Heroes always developed, while ignoring the level gap. This would be true this time around. Still, the Elite monster be too hard for a level 2. The hill was too steep, so Artpe formulated a plan to decrease the gradient.

“First, we have to kill all the monsters inside the room to increase our level. If we consider your Stats, even a single level increase will allow you to pierce through the Elite Monster’s defense.”

“What do I do after that?”

“If you walk forward as if nothing is wrong, the Elite Zombie will try to attack you. At that moment, I’ll attack to create an opportunity for you. You’ll attack afterwards for good measure, and you’ll retreat. Your attack won’t be too effective, but I’ll follow it up with an additional attack. Don’t worry too much about it.”

“All right! What do I do afterwards?”

“Afterwards, you retreat and return to this entrance.”

“....huh?”

“Just be familiar with the plan I explained right now. All right?”

“Yes!..... Yes?”

Matel didn’t see the need to retreat mid fight, so she still had questions about the plan. However, Artpe didn’t give any further explanations. Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she entered the Dungeon’s first room with Artpe.

“I... Wa... Wa.....”

“Humans.... Killed me....”

“Daughter’s face..... Want to see.....”

It was a pretty large room and there were a total of six zombies there! Unlike the Elite Zombie, these zombies were around level 5. When they entered the room, the zombies became aware of them.

They slowly got up.

The zombies were letting out a rotting stench, and their nails were poisonous. They were a very annoying opponent to face, but they were easy to kill. The zombies were slow. It was the ideal candidate for a beginner hero to face.

“What shall we do, Artpe? He wants to see his daughter’s face....”

Their enemies were getting up slowly, and this was the ideal time to attack them. However, Maetel wasn’t moving at all! Tears gathered in her eyes when she heard their words.

He had expected her to snap under the pressure. He had expected her to get angry.

Artpe nodded his head as if he understood her feelings. He spoke to her.

“Occasionally, there are some adventurers, who hesitate from attacking, when they hear the words spoken by the zombies.”

“That’s right! How can we attack such pitiful people! We can’t kill them twice!”

“However, there’s something unusual here to be discovered.”

Artpe turned to look at Maetel with sharp eyes.

“If we wait a little bit longer, all the zombies will speak in a uniform pattern. This fact can be observed.”

“My daughter’s.... I want to see.....”

“Yes, just like that.”

“Wow. I think that zombie also has a daughter.”

“There is more to it than that.”

Maetel and Artpe had responded to their words, and the zombies felt their advance slow. Several zombie hesitated before they started talking about the same subject!

“Daughter.... My daughter.....”

“My daughter’s face……. See…….”

“It seems they were all blessed with daughters!”

“If we gathered 100 zombies here, they would all have said the same thing. They don’t have daughters. They are just trying to make you hesitate.”

“Mmm…?”

This was when Maetel’s reaction changed.

“Are they… Are they perhaps lying?”

“Isn’t it shocking? However, all monsters lie in order to kill humans. The brains of these zombies are all rotted away. Monsters lie on instinct.”

“…….”

Maetel didn’t respond to Artpe’s words. The hero just bit her lips. Then she lashed out towards the nearest zombie. She severed its legs.

The strike was so strong and sharp that Artpe wanted to question if she really was a level 2! It was as if the thread holding up the zombie had been severed. It fell to the floor as it writhed.

[Maetel]

[Level : 2]

[Critical Hit Lv1]

“Lying is bad…….”

Maetel raised her gaze.

Artpe let out a gasp as he took a step backwards.

There was a towering rage within Maetel’s eyes!

“Lying is bad!”

“Daughter…….”

“Stop lying!”

“Daughhhhhhhhter!”

The hero’s fight was incredible. No one had taught her this tactic, yet she severed the legs of zombies slowly coming towards her. The zombies were all writhing on the ground!

The hero yelled with fire raging in her eyes.

“I’ll never believe a monster’s words from now on!”

“Yes, that’s the stance to take!”

An ex-Four Heavenly King had succeeded in making the hero abandon her good character!

“Goo-wuhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Of course, the zombies had fallen to the floor, but they continued moving by dragging their bodies forward. Their speed of advance was incredibly slow. Maetel approached the closest zombie, and she cut off the head of the zombie. She went down the line. After she cut three heads, she turned around to look at Artpe as if she had just remembered something she had forgotten.

“If I kill them all, I’m the only one that’ll grow. Artpe has to increase his level!”

“No, you can kill the rest. You are the one fighting from the front. You are more important than me right now.”

“All right!”

When Artpe said his words, Maetel unhesitatingly finished off the zombies. It seemed she was still enraged by the fact that the zombies had lied to her. Of course, even in her angered state, she was careful in preserving the sword’s durability. Her actions were praiseworthy.

When she killed the six zombies, Artpe stepped forward to tap on the zombies.

“Let’s loot first....”

“No matter how many times I see it, it is fascinating.”

Of course, the loot that came out from the lousy zombies weren't much better than what the goblins had dropped. The only thing that dropped with greater probability was their long nails, which was seeped with poison. It was a very good weapon for the current Artpe.

“There are three poisoned nails and five copper coins. That should be it. Now you should walk....”

Artpe was instructing Maetel on what to do next, but he shut his mouth. He had naturally activated his Read All Creation, and he had shut his mouth when he saw the information in front of him.

[Maetel]

[Level – 4]

“What?”

Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement. However, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he shook his head from side to side.

“It's nothing.”

The six zombies were level 5 monsters, but this didn't mean her level should have grown from level 2 to 4 in one sitting. However, this was normal for her.

‘Heroes are an abnormality. This was especially true for this one in particular if her Innate ability was taken into account... I'm pretty sure that this iteration of the hero will awaken to the same ability.’

A spike of jealousy towards the hero was felt by him, but it disappeared quickly. This hero was on his side now. He spoke once again to the pure and simple girl, who was looking at him with worried eyes.

“Just walk forward.”

“Yes.”

Maetel didn't hesitate. She walked forward. When she reached the exit, the hidden Elite Zombie appeared, and it tried to bite her neck. Artpe threw a Mana-infused dagger. The Elite Zombie stiffened!

“Goo-wuhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

“Eh-eet!”

Its Stealth ability was down, so Maetel was able to see the bastard. She unhesitatingly swung her sword towards its leg! Of course, this zombie wasn't called Elite for nothing. There was no way its leg would be cut off with a single blow like the other zombies.....

“Goo-wuhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

“It fell off!?”

“I'm really angry right now!”

“Kee-ahhhhhh!”

The next attack severed both legs, and the Elite Zombie fell to the floor!

A level 10 Elite monster usually needed a 3 member party of similar level to take it down. Maetel had been able to neutralize it with just three hits.

“So we have to return to the entrance now, Artpe?”

Maetel took two steps away from the Elite Zombie. She gallantly yelled towards Artpe. Artpe looked at the fierce girl. He scratched his head as he gave a reply.

“No, you can just kill it.”

“Huh?”

“I said you can just kill it.”

“Huh...?”

The hero was much stronger than he had estimated, so his plan

had went up in smoke. Artpe tilted his head, and he watched the girl's sword find the Elite Zombie's weak spot in an instant. As he watched her repeatedly bring down the sword....

He just decided to laugh it off.

Chapter 6 – Dungeon with Death (2)

Many adventures entered the dungeons with dreams of becoming rich overnight. However, most of them were wiped out before they were able to get past the 1st floor. The reasons varied. They might be lacking in combat capability, or they might not have caught sight of a trap. They might have mismanaged their equipments or they might have ran out of food.

“Wow, Look! Look at this stairway! Does this stairway perhaps lead to the second floor?”

“Yes, that’s right..”

Of course, their team’s battle capability was taken care of by the human hero Maetel. Everything else was taken care of by the ex-Four Heavenly King Artpe. There was no way this two man team would face any difficulties here. After defeating the Elite Zombie, Maetel had advanced into being a level 6. The momentum created by Maetel allowed them to clear the 1st floor in just 6 hours. They had cleared it at superspeed. At the end of the 1st floor, Maetel was level 8, and Artpe somehow managed to advance into being level 5.

“Mmmmmmm. Why am I progressing so fast? Artpe is more amazing than me.”

“It is usually like that. Each person has a different area of expertise.”

Maetel’s growth speed was much faster than his. He should be upset at this reality, but Artpe already knew about the growth speed displayed by the hero in his previous life. In Artpe’s eyes, the current Maetel was progressing very slowly. She’ll probably level up much faster when she awakens to her Innate ability.

“This won’t do.”

“What?”

Unlike Artpe, who had just accepted this fact, Maetel thought

long and hard in front of the stairway Afterwards, she resolutely nodded her head as she turned to look at Artpe.

“We have to match our levels.”

“No, we really don’t need to do that. As I said before, it’ll be safer for us if you leveled up, since you are in the front....”

“We have to match our levels.”

The light in Maetel’s eyes was very serious. Artpe couldn’t help but ask the question.

“What’s the reason behind this?”

“If our level difference is too high, I’m afraid we will grow apart.”

“You are using some pretty poetic figure of speech.....?”

However, the point brought up by Maetel unexpectedly touched on the core of a problem faced by all parties. This was one of the main reasons why most parties broke up over time. If one member of the party increased his level too quickly, it meant the other party member would fall behind. As the difference in level becomes more severe, the difference in ability also widened. At that point, it was mutually harmful for that party to remain together. It was to be expected, since a monster’s level wasn’t fluid. It didn’t adjusted to the level of its opponent.

‘I’m pretty sure this dummy didn’t think that far ahead... She simply doesn’t want a gap to form between the two of us.’

Artpe let out a bitter laugh. He had wanted to overwhelmingly develop Maetel’s ability. This would allow him simply stand in the back. He had planned on eating the crumbs off her table. However, he had no choice now, since the hero wouldn’t let go of this issue. He had to keep step with her to a certain extent.

“All right. We’ll do that, but my growth rate is much slower than yours. It’ll be impossible to match our levels. How about we split

the monsters evenly?”

“I really would like it to be the same....”

Maetel grumbled as if she didn’t like the idea, but in the end, she accepted it.

“Well, let’s head up then.”

“Why are you going up? You should stand still.”

After Artpe browbeat Maetel, he extended his Mana infused hand. He grabbed and pulled at something in the empty air. Suddenly, the stairway in front of them collapsed as a fairly large wooden chest rose up. Maetel shouted in joy. Artpe winked at her as he gave her an explanation.

“This is a trap. If you went up without discovering this box, poisoned needles would have shot out from the floor to kill you.”

“Heeeeek!”

“Of course, even if someone was lucky enough to find this box, they wouldn’t have known that this is a monster called Mimic. It is pretending to be a treasure chest, and most adventurers usually die from its attack.”

“Ooooooh.”

“The worst part happens when one identifies and kills the Mimic. It shoots out poisoned needles when it is killed.”

“I don’t like this anymore!”

In truth, the level 5 zombies were to be expected inside a Dungeon near a beginner’s town. However, they had encountered a pretty elaborate trap within the Dungeon, and that fact did surprise him. He was also surprised at finding an Elite monster within the first room of the Dungeon!

‘The past hero didn’t explore this Dungeon. There were only shitty zombies out at the entrance, so she hadn’t even bothered to come into this Dungeon. Since this is supposed to be a beginner’s

Dungeon, I might have underestimated it.... Maybe this Dungeon is....’

This might be a hidden treasure trove. Artpe swallowed back the words he had almost blurted out. A beautiful flower had its thorns. Currently, they needed an opportunity to safely level up. They shouldn’t be putting their life on the line to earn treasures. This couldn’t be seen as being all good news.

“What should I do, Artpe?”

“Get back.”

“Yes!”

Artpe was holding four long nails between his fingers. Of course, these were the nails gathered by diligently killing the zombies. As expected, it was a lousy weapon. It could inflict a very weak poison effect when thrown towards an opponent.

On the other hand, it was an entirely different story if it was used by someone, who could infuse his Mana. He could strengthen the items. Its toxicity and sharpness was strengthened, but the nails would cease to exist once the Mana was exhausted. It was a single use weapon, but it would be able to cause significant amount of damage!

Of course, if one was skilled enough to infuse and strengthen an item, one wouldn’t usually use it on nails acquired from zombies. It would be much better to use it on throwing weapons. Still, this method of Mana infusion was only known to those, who suffered from cold and hunger, like Artpe in the past. It was a very sad actuality.

“Eh-eet.”

When Artpe confirmed that Maetel had retreated behind his back, he quickly and accurately threw four nails towards the box. The Mimic had passively stood still like a wooden box, but when the nails were about to hit, it let out a weird sound. Then it jumped

to avoid the nails....

“It’s a fake, you retard!”

[Geeeeeeeeeeee!]

In a flash, the nails changed direction to pierce the wooden box. The Mimic hung in the air, and the trap located below its original position activated. Several dozen poison needles shot out of the ground to riddle the Mimic’s body with holes!

[Gee-geek!]

It let a short cry before it became silent. It had bitten its tongue in its death.

Maetel, who had stayed silent, carefully asked Artpe a question.

“Is it over....?”

“Yes, it is over..”

The Mimic was one of the rare and special monsters. Therefore, the ‘reward’ it dropped was overwhelmingly better when compared to its difficulty. As proof, Artpe’s EXP exploded upwards after defeating it. He had leveled up twice, and he felt the energy within his body surge forward. Even if he hadn’t checked it with his Read All Creation ability, the Mimic was most definitely dead.

“Artpe is really amazing.... I never expected you to kill it in such a way!”

“I’m going to get sick of hearing that soon.”

Artpe replied flatly, and he moved towards the dead Mimic. The dead Mimic, which had its tongue out, was flipped over by Artpe. When he shook it, coins and small daggers fell onto the floor. When she saw this, Maetel yelled out in surprise.

“I thought this monster wasn’t a treasure box. What’s going on?”

“It swallowed humans, who mistook it for a treasure chest. It digested everything it could, and the rest are leftovers kept inside

its body. This is also another reason why it is easy to confuse a Mimic with a treasure chest.”

“Monsters are really bad....!”

“I wouldn’t really say they are bad....”

The monsters were born this way. Humans slaughtered and ate innocent pigs and cows. It was the same with monsters. They ate humans. This couldn’t be simply be explained by the concept of good and evil. Everyone was just struggling to live.

“However, for us to live, he have to kill all of them.”

“I’m not sure what you are trying to say, but I’ll defeat anything that torments Artpe!”

When she killed the goblins for the first time, she had trembled like a leaf from the shock. This happened only yesterday, yet she was quick to act heroic in front of him now.

For a moment, the image of the hero from the past superimposed on the current hero, and it gave him the goosebumps. Now that he thought about it, the past hero hadn’t shown any signs of hostility towards him. Instead, she had felt sorry and worry for him. This truth came to him a bit late. He kept a loose smile on his face as he collected the loot from the Mimic.

They had earned only 26 bronze coins from killing all the zombies on the first floor. The Mimic had barfed out 138 bronze coins. Moreover, there were a whopping three silver coins within the loot. Each silver coin was worth a 100 times more than a bronze coin.

If one possessed 2 silver coins, one could feed a family of four for a month. Maetel had lived her entire life in the back-country, so of course, the amount made her eyes turn round.

“Amazing!”

“This is nothing compared to what you’ll experience and earn

from now on.”

“Don’t say ‘you’, say ‘us’!”

“Yes, yes..”

After he roughly ruffled Maetel’s head, he threw the empty husk of the Mimic to the floor. The dead corpse cleanly vaporized into the air, and in its place, a book was left behind. It was as absurd a scene as the goblins spitting out the bronze coins.

“It is a book...?”

“The Mimic is a rare monster that is very hard to encounter. Moreover, it is very troublesome to kill. This is why the ‘reward’ is overwhelmingly generous. It is generous in terms of EXP and....”

It didn’t matter if the content of the book was lousy. A magic book was guaranteed to be worth 30 silver coins no matter what. He grinned as he picked up the ‘Skill Book’.

“...items. If one is able to safely kill the Mimic, it is the same as finding a treasure box.”

“Amazing!”

Maetel couldn’t write, but she could read a little bit. She clapped her hands as she looked over the book.

“Amazing. It says Hyper Loving! Love means deep affections. Didn’t Artpe teach me that before? This means this magic is related to love!”

“Uh.... Mmm. Nope.”

Artpe hadn’t read the name of the skill...no, he hadn’t read the name of the Spell Book yet. When he heard Maetel’s words, his face crumpled in distress. Why did such an item have to come out! On the other hand, Maetel wasn’t even aware of what Artpe was thinking inside. Her cheeks were bright red as she fidgeted in place.

“With this magic, Artpe and I... Our l...love will....”

“It isn’t love. It is rub.”

“What does rub mean?”

“Rubbing means friction.”

“....huh?”

Maetel tilted her head. However, Artpe’s expression was still crumpled in a harsh manner.

It was a useless spell for him!

The Rubbing type spells were divided into Soft Rubbing, Rubbing, Hard Rubbing and Hyper Rubbing. It looked mysterious, because it was subdivided into 4 types. However, its special effect was very simple.

It basically allowed one to rub Mana against one’s enemies!

In the off chance that there was some secret meaning hidden behind the spell, Magicians had conducted research on this spell. However, nothing much was gained from the studies. This didn’t mean the research had been completely fruitless. Some high ranking aristocrats, who possessed enough wealth to hire mages, found that the Rubbing magic allowed them to feel some peculiar sensations. It opened the door to some awkward possibilities. It was best to omit such details.

“Basically, Hyper Rubbing is the same as rubbing very hard.”

“Mmm. Ooooooh-mmmmm.....?”

If there was one advantage to this spell, the Rubbing Skill didn’t have any level restrictions. Artpe would have no trouble learning it right now.

At this point, Maetel had another question.

“So why do you have to learn such a useless magic?”

“All Skill Books and Spell Books allows one to expand one’s limits, It grows one’s abilities. This effect occurs just from learning

it. This is why all Skill Books and Magic Books are expensive despite its content.”

This was one of the biggest reasons why the hero class was considered to be a cheat. The hero could learn all Skills and Spells. If there was a supply of Skill Books, the hero could basically learn all of them using just the base ability!

“Ah. Of course, Skills or Magic can fail if you don’t completely understand what you learned. This is why it isn’t such an overwhelming advantage to learn these Books. The technical term for this is called Failure effects. You should remember that term.”

“Failure effects.... I memorized it!”

Of course, this term was unrelated to Artpe. He had the Read All Creation. He was able to understand all phenomena! Artpe immediately learned the Hyper Rubbing, and the purity of his magical energy increased. It bolstered his body. He felt the overwhelming magical energy fill him, and he let out a deep sigh.

“Hoo-oooooh.”

Even if Rubbing was a useless magic, Hyper Rubbing was the best tier amongst the Rubbing magic. Of course, the level of magical knowledge within was high (the result was lousy), and the amount of Mana reacting to the activation of the magic was also enormous (the result was lousy). Still, Artpe had gained almost 20 magical energy just from learning the spell. The effect was amazing!

“Maybe, this might be better than learning a mediocre spell like the Fire Needle. The Mana I can throw around will be stronger than most fireballs.”

“As expected, Artpe is amazing!”

“I knew you were going to say that. Let’s go.”

They had gathered everything that needed to be gathered. If one looked only at the results, one could see that they were growing at ridiculous rate. He couldn’t shake the feeling that this didn’t feel

right to him. Still, Artpe had no choice, but to move forward.

Maetel reaffirmed the fact that Artpe was amazing. She was filled with pride for him, and she followed behind him like a puppy.

The party of heroes safely entered the second floor. Then they cleared the third floor and the fourth floor. They were moving so fast through the Dungeon that they were bringing in more supply than they were using. They were able to gather weapons and food. The most important resource was water, but they were able to solve the problem of acquiring water in the middle of the second floor. They had found a spring.

After the Elite Zombie, no Elite monsters had appeared. The monsters didn't stand a chance against Artpe's poison nails and Maetel's sword. The Dungeon exploration was very easy.

This was how the two heroes reached the 6th floor of the Dungeon.

“What the hell! How long is this Dungeon!”

“Dungeons are really fun! Let's keep going forward!”

“Hey! There's a trap over there! Stop!”

At this point, Maetel was level 29, and Artpe had reached level 24.

Chapter 7 – Dungeon with Death (3)

As they explored the 6th floor of the Dungeon, Artpe was gradually feeling an odd sensation. No matter how he thought about it this Dungeon was too long.

“What kind of Dungeon is this?”

“Aren’t all Dungeons like this?”

“Most Dungeons are 3 floors long. This is abnormal.”

Normally, if one looked at the Dungeon entrance, one could generally assess the difficulty of a Dungeon. If a level 5 monster appeared on the first floor, the boss’ level was usually level 10 in the beginner’s Dungeon.

If there was an extra floor, the boss’ level would be around 15. If the Dungeon was longer than expected, it would usually end on the third floor. The boss’ level would be around level 20. Even if the beginner adventurers were able to break through the Dungeon easily, they would all be killed in the end.

But this place...

[Humans.... I will kill everyone, who dares to intrude.]

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

A level 33 Skeleton was quickly charging towards them. Its eyes were emitting a blue light. Maetel unhesitatingly charged forward to meet the Skeleton. She dodged the Bone Sword way too easily, and she swung a Bone Club acquired from a Skeleton Warrior. It ruthlessly crushed the Skeleton’s skull.

From the rear, two Skeleton Archers had been trying to let loose Bone Arrows. Artpe had already taken care of them by throwing Mana infused Bone Daggers towards them. The battle within the 3rd room of the 6th floor ended without any complications.

“We are already on the 6th floor, yet there are no signs of this

Dungeon ending!”

“I won again! Hoo-hee-hee.”

As Maetel kept winning, she realized that there was pleasure in triumph. Artpe was sure she hadn’t acted this way in the past, so he wondered what had happened to ruin the trajectory of her growth. Was Artpe really the one to cause this change? In his past life, if the Demon King had seceded his seat to Artpe, he wondered if he would have been able to bring about a victory for the Demon world against the human world. This was how great his brainwashing was!

“Why is Artpe so good at throwing weapons?”

“You were able to freely control and wield a blunt weapon when you picked it up. My skills aren’t as great as yours.”

[Maetel]

[Level : 29]

[Blunt Weapon Lv4]

Artpe snorted at Maetel’s words as he looted the fallen Skeletons. Maetel was now used to the concept of looting, so she helped Artpe. A silver coin had dropped from one of the monsters. It felt as if it was eons ago(it had been around 4 days) when they had been surprised by the appearance of silver coins. Now the two of them picked it up without being surprised by its presence.

“It feels almost magical when my level increases. I know I am the same person, yet I am well aware that that I can do much more now! Something I would consider to be miraculous in the past is now part of my daily life. Things that I considered to be impossible are within my reach. This really is quite enjoyable.”

“Normally, that sensation can be barely achieved only after undergoing countless tribulation. Please keep that in mind.”

Of course, Artpe was going through the same process as her, but

Artpe had experienced reaching level 350 in his past life. He was able to keep everything in perspective.

Maetel's talent wasn't simply better than others, because she had superior strength and status. It had to do with her constitution and level. Moreover, she possessed an instinct that allowed her to adapt in battle situations. She had the potential to bring out the best result from within herself.

"Currently, we are on par with most mercenaries. I'm talking about career mercenaries, who've been to war."

"What are you saying, Artpe? We are just 12 years old!"

When he heard those words, Artpe sharply glared at her as he spoke to Maetel.

"You should never judge the strength of others based on their appearance or age. This is the first rule of survival."

"Y...yes.."

"Moreover, I don't want you to blame our weakness on our age. Our enemies won't go easy on us, because we are young."

"Yes, all right.... Artpe is too cool."

"You always come to a weird conclusion."

Artpe finished his looting. He checked his equipment, ration and water by habit as he extended his Mana Threads. For the past couple days, he had learned to handle Mana inside a human boy's body. His use of Mana had come a very long way compared to the first time he manifested his Mana. He hadn't confirmed this yet, but if he checked in own information, his Mana Control skill should have developed nicely.

"Mmmmm?"

Something was caught on his Mana Thread. He had been thinking everything was going too smoothly after they had encountered the Elite monster on the 1st floor. It was still a long

ways off, but at the end of the 6th floor, Artpe could feel the presence of a monster superior to any monster they had faced up to this point. It was a Skeleton, but it was holding a bastard sword that was most definitely not made out of bones....

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

His Mana Thread was severed.

“Crazy!”

The monster possessed self-awareness, and it could handle Mana!? After Artpe assessed the situation, he once again sent several dozen threads into his surrounding. At the same time, he grabbed Maetel’s hand.

“Run! Right now!”

“No matter who the enemy is, we should try fighting it first....”

“This is completely different from the Elite Zombie we met earlier! Run!”

“All right!”

The two started running in a hurry. They had doubled back, but a Skeleton was approaching them at overwhelming speed. Each room of the Dungeon was separated by a steel door, and the Skeleton was simply busting through them as it gathered the other monsters under its command. It was the worst type of Elite monster!

“Do you think I’ll go down....so easily!”

His Mana Threads had been severed, but he had sent out his Mana Threads once again. This move wasn’t a waste of Mana. Artpe had used the power of his Read All Creation ability, and he used it to activate all the traps with his Mana Threads. The traps got in the way of the Skeletons.

[Goo-wuhhhhhhhhh!]

The Skeletons were being destroyed at various locations. Even

the Elite Skeleton leading the horde was being damaged. Still, the Elite Skeleton hadn't slowed down much. Instead, it started using the corpses of dead Skeletons to shield itself from the traps.

“Tsk.....!”

This Dungeon had been annoying in the fact that it had more traps than monsters. However, none of the traps would be able to cause critical damage to the Elite Skeleton. Artpe mainly focused on killing the Skeletons trailing behind the Elite Skeleton with the traps. Artpe and Maetel kept retreating.

“Where are we running to, Artpe?!?”

“We are going to the Dungeon entrance.”

“The Dungeon entrance? Wait a moment... The Dungeon entrance on the first floor!?”

Maetel asked as if she wished this wasn't the case, but Artpe nodded with a stiff expression on his face.

“If we don't get there in time, we are dead.”

“We can't win against it?”

“It is impossible to win against it through a frontal assault.”

Even if Maetel was an extraordinary genius, she was a hero, who had reached level 29 in less than a week. There was no way she would be able to win against it. Of course, she would lose, since the Elite Skeleton was level 60. The important fact was that it had already crossed the level 50 threshold.

“In exchange for being able to learn all Skills, we will continue to be heroes until we defeat the Demon King. Aside from the Demon race, all the other races gain a high rank Class when they reach certain levels. It allows one to become more powerful and more specialized. The first time one could earn this high rank Class is at level....”

It was at level 50. Monsters were no exception. There was a stark

difference between monsters that had or hadn't crossed the level 50 threshold. It wasn't an exaggeration to say a level 50 monster was 1.5 times stronger than a level 49 monster. The Elite Skeleton had already passed level 50. It had reached level 60!

"It is also equipped with a proper sword and a shield. This means it had gained a Warrior type high rank Class. It possesses the ability to command all the Undeads in this Dungeon. A monster of this caliber could easily dispose any of the normal low rank Dungeon bosses."

The bastard was breaking through the Dungeon at an incredible speed. There weren't any traps left that Artpe could activate any more. He had been successful in destroying a good amount of normal Skeletons. Still, it would be hard for Artpe to do anything against them anymore. The Elite Skeleton was gradually closing the distance. If things progressed in this fashion, they would have to fight it before they could climb to the 5th floor.....

"....get on, Artpe."

At that moment, Maetel spoke with a firm voice.

What did you she want him to do?

He let out a sound that expressed his confusion. However, Maetel didn't wait for him to give a concrete answer. She put him on her back!

"Heeng. I wanted this to be the other way around.... Hmmph.."

"What the hell are you talk.... Ooh-ahhhhhhhh!?"

[Maetel]

[Level : 29]

[Battle Dash Lv1]

Again!

She once again learned a Skill that transcended her level as if it was nothing.... Moreover, it was an exclusive skill for the high

rank Class! Artpe didn't have time to express his dismay. While she gave him a piggyback, Maetel started running through the hallways of the Dungeon at an incredibly fast speed!

“Hang on tight, Artpe!”

“Even if you hadn't said anything, I'm already doing that. Shit!”

Artpe was being carried on Maetel's back. It was unsightly, but he knew this was the most effective method. This was why he got comfortable in this position, and he stretched out a hand backwards. At that moment, they were climbing the stairs connecting the 6th and 5th floor. When they were about to reach the 5th floor, he grabbed Matel's shoulder. He stopped her.

“Wait a moment, Maetel.”

“What is it, Art.... Kyahhhk!”

Even if it was pure Mana, one could physically manifest it if one brought out enough Mana. A thick Mana Iron Mace was formed in Artpe's hand, and he brought it down against the stairway. The stairway let out a horrific sound as it crumbled!

“Artpe is amazing! It will no longer be able to follow us anymore!”

“No, it'll probably destroy its Skeleton underlings to create a pile until it can reach this floor.”

“.....”

“Still, it'll buy us some time, and at the same time, it'll lessen the enemy's numbers. Let's hurry!”

They went from the 6th floor to the 5th, 5th to 4th, and 4th to the 3rd floor. It didn't matter how fast they ran, and it didn't matter how many stairways they had destroyed. The Skeleton Warrior kept increasing its speed. When they entered the 2nd floor, the Skeleton Warrior could be seen with the naked eye!

[Goo-wuhhhhhhhh!]

“You should try saying something else, you bone headed dummy!”

[I’ll kill humans!]

“It can say other lines!?”

On the second floor, there weren’t any decent traps that could be activated by Artpe. Artpe wondered if should attack the Elite Skeleton by throwing all of his throwing weapons. However, he determined it wasn’t the right moment to use his weapons. Instead, he activated the only magic he could cast.

“My will within me. I communicate with the world. Burst on the ground.”

[Goo-wuhhhhhhhh! Magic is useles.....]

“Hyper Rubbing!”

[Hmmm!?!]

Even if he activated the Hyper Rubbing against his enemies, it would simply make their joints rub against each other. It was a useless attack. However, Artpe had not been aiming for the monsters. He was aiming for the hallway in front of them!

In a flash, the power of Mana started scrubbing hard against the hallway. The hallway shone from being polished. Maetel was impressed by this sight.

“Wow. Now that we have this magic, we don’t have to worry about cleaning!”

“You’ll never have to clean in your life.”

“Ah, no! We have to split the housework in a fair manner. I can’t make Artpe do all the hard work!”

The fact that she was able to spout such nonsense meant that Maetel’s condition was still ok! He was able to check the mental state of Maetel in an odd way. Afterwards, he checked on the monsters, who had been chasing them.

The very first monster he checked was the Elite Skeleton Warrior. It had been running in front of the mob. It knew that Artpe's magic couldn't directly damage its body, so it had unhesitatingly took a step forward. The Skeleton was like a dog on ice. It slid all over the place before it fell to the floor.!

[Kill humans, ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

It had used a powerful Shouting skill, but it failed to damage the hero's party. Instead, the normal Skeletons, who had been running behind the Elite Skeleton, started sliding on the floor towards the Elite Skeleton. The normal Skeletons delivered power body blows to the Elite Skeleton.

[Gwuhhhhhhhhhh!]

[Gee-gee-gee-gee-gee-gee]

[My precious C3 cervical vertebrae.....!]

Artpe let out a shout of delight. While he was casting his magic, he hadn't been sure if his plan would work. Artpe had used the Hyper Rubbing spell on the earthen floor. The magic worked furiously as it made the ground slicker than an oiled steel plate. When the monsters stepped on the floor, the monsters had all fallen to the floor in order.

Artpe had used magical energy to influence the physical world. He had completely changed the terrain. Even if his enemy had the power to resist against the Mana, it couldn't avoid this debacle.

Chapter 8 – Dungeon with Death (4)

The fact that the Skeletons were running at incredible speed meant that the effect of the collision was that much more powerful. The Skeletons impacted against each other as they became tangled. The ones that were impacted hard died. Artpe had come up with this idea in the spur of the moment, yet his plan had been incredibly effective!

“Of course, it is much more efficient in terms of Mana and time to use a magic spell that produces the same result.”

“Artpe is amazing.!”

“Yes, yes. I am amazing.”

The two of them had effectively blocked the rush attempt by the Skeletons, and they were able to arrive at the 1st floor. Of course, he had destroyed the stairway leading to the 1st floor in spectacular fashion. The regular Skeletons had to be made into stepping stones for the Skeleton Warrior to reach the 1st floor. In the end, only four Skeleton including the Elite Skeleton Warrior made it up to the 1st floor.

“The zombies aren’t back yet.”

“We killed them all. Other adventurers have to enter and die here for there to be new zombies.”

“I don’t want to know about such truths.....”

[Gwuhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Hey, hurry. Hurry.”

“Leave it to me!”

She carried a boy, who weighed more than her, through the Dungeon. She ran from the 6th floor to the 1st floor. It was as if his weight was negligible to her. Then there was the boy, who kept impeding the progress of the monsters using his Mana Control and

magic spells. If others saw this sight, they would have been in disbelief.

Even if their levels were high, their actual bodies, which used these abilities, were immature. Artpe spoke as if what they had done was nothing special, but he was looking at it through the standard of the Demon race, not humans!

“We are almost there. We are almost at the entrance!”

“Hurry up! They are just around the corner!”

[I’ll kill humans! I’ll kill humans!]

It seemed the Hyper Rubbing from before had caused a lot of damage. The Skeleton Warrior’s shield had a fairly large crack. He could see small thread-like fissures on its skull. If someone had told him the Skeleton Warrior had been in a battle before coming here, he would have believed it.

[Killllllllllllllllllllllllllllllllll!]

However, it hadn’t been a true fight. It had been damaged this much by simply slipping and falling hard on the floor. This fact probably probably fueling its anger. There actually was a red energy blanketing its body. Artpe was sure it was a Buff type skill that allowed it to temporarily raise its abilities. It was triggered by its heightened emotional state. It was only an Undead, yet it had an Emotion type skill!

“Hurry!”

“Eek. I’m falling behind. We aren’t going to make it... Artpe~”

“Tsk. It can’t be helped.”

He replied in a relaxed manner, but his Mana was close to being depleted. It would be impossible for him to once again make the entire length of the hallway slippery to stop the Skeletons. If so.....

“Eh-eet!”

“Kyahhhk!”

Artpe unfurled his hand as he manifested his magic. At that moment, Maetel slid down the hallway with Artpe on her back. To be precise, the path in front of them had turned smooth. It was as if the dirt hallway was pulling them forward!

Maetel realized Artpe was using his magic in front of them, so she was cautious as she tried her best not to fall over. Then she used the slick floor to propel herself forward. This girl's talent was really endless.

[Humaaaaaaaaaans!]

“We are going to die. We are going to d.....”

“We’ve arrived!”

When he ran out of magic, the two of them were suddenly thrown forward towards the entrance of the Dungeon. Afterwards, the Skeleton Warrior's bastard sword passed through the location where Artpe's head used to be. Several strands of his hair was cut as it flew into the air.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“How dare you cut Artpe's hair! I won't forgive you!”

“Calm down!”

Maetel had taken out her club, and she was about to charge the Skeleton Warrior. Artpe desperately tried to hold her back. Afterwards, Maetel realized something weird had occurred.

“...what is it doing?”

“What does it look like it is doing?”

There was a boundary that separated the Dungeon's entrance from the 1st room. The Skeleton Warrior grinded its teeth as it swung its sword, but it stood beyond the boundary. Of course, the party had already entered into the Dungeon's entrance, so the bastard sword couldn't reach them.

“We are right in front of them, so why aren't they coming....?”

“The Dungeon’s monsters can’t come out to the Dungeon’s entrance.”

“Ah. I’m sure Artpe explained this to me before! So that is why they can’t come out even though they are right in front of us?”

“That’s right.”

The Skeleton underling had already fallen to the floor in exhaustion. Only the Skeleton Warrior kept swinging its sword as if it held lingering resentment towards them. Still, it looked less spirited compared to when it first showed up. It looked a bit lacking...

“So what is the reason behind it? I really don’t know, Artpe! How come? Huh?”

“Those are some very good questions.”

Artpe laughed in a kind manner as he answered her question. Of course, as he spoke, he was gathering Mana into his dagger to attack the silly Skeleton Warrior.

“I don’t know either!”

“Ah-ha. I see!”

This was why it was convenient to have a dummy next to you!

[Kill! Kill! Kill!]

“Yes. I want you to keep talking like that!”

Artpe replied in a friendly manner towards the Skeleton Warrior, whose words were filled with resentment and anger. He continued to gather his Mana. He had consumed an incredible amount of Mana, but he was recovering a fair amount by standing still.

This was something to be expected during his time as a Demon, but now he was a human child. This was atypical. He had the body of a human, yet his affinity with Mana was off the chart. Even if he used his Read All Creation ability, he couldn’t figure out why he was like this. He just decided to think of this as a boon.

[I'll kill humans! Kill! I'll kill.... I give up.]

“Hey hey. Don't give up now!”

The Skeleton Warrior had swung his bastard sword for a long time, but in the end, it came to a realization that it wouldn't be able to cross into the Dungeon's entrance. In front of this reality, it had been about to give up. This was when Artpe threw a Mana infused dagger toward it as he spoke words of encouragement.

Artpe was able to see the flight path of the dagger, since it was letting out a blue Mana that could only be seen by Artpe. The Mana flooded forward as the dagger embedded itself on top of the Skeleton Warrior's head. When the Skeleton Warrior had fallen from the Hyper Rubbing spell, the other Skeletons had crashed into it. It caused a thread-like fissure to form on its skull. The dagger had accurately burrowed into the fissure.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhh! I'll kill you!]

“Yes! That's the right idea!”

“Artpe. You are so bad.....”

The fire, which had been dimming, with the Skeleton Warrior started to burn white hot again. It had felt impotent before, but now it renewed its resolve. It diligently swung its sword. Artpe kept nodding his head as if to cheer on the Skeleton Warrior. He continued to recover his Mana. Maetel finally realized Artpe's tactic, so she asked with a dumbfounded look in her eyes.

“Artpe. I'm not talented at attacking from a distance. What should I do?”

“You can't do anything here. You should just eat the dry ration.”

“Yes!”

Maetel busily ate the rations and water. As expected, she had consumed a lot of Stamina by running from the 6th floor to the 1st floor, while carrying Artpe. While she ate, he diligently gathered

Mana, and he infused it into another dagger.

In the process of traversing the 6 floors, they had found articles left behind by the deceased adventurers, who had died over countless years. They had also found the treasure chests. This was why Artpe had an ample supply of throwing weapons. He didn't have to worry about running out of weapons.

[Human! Humaaaaaaaaaan! I give up!]

“No, you can do this!”

[I can't do this!]

“Don't believe yourself! I want you to believe in me, who believes in you!”

“.....”

The Skeleton Warrior kept swinging its sword, but it was mired in the feeling of hopelessness. Artpe had to keep attacking it. He had to keep it distracted. Maetel was watching a human and an Undead converse. She decided not to think too deeply about this. The important point right now was the fact that Artpe had brilliantly embedded four daggers into its body..

“All right. This is going smoothly.”

[Goo-ahhhhhhhh! I give up!]

“You suffered at the hands of children, who haven't even reached half your level. Are you really going to run away now?”

[Kooooooooooooooooo!]

If the Skeleton Warrior simply stayed here, Artpe would play around with it until it died. Unfortunately, the Skeleton Warrior's intelligence wasn't that high. Above all else, the Skeleton Warrior was in the grip of the Rage Buff.

The Buff was triggered by an emotion. The pros of a Buff skill was the fact that it didn't consume a lot of magical energy, yet it increased one's level significantly. If there was a downside, it was

the fact that it was hard to break out of the emotion that had activated the Buff. This was why the Skeleton Warrior was unable to give up on the battle. It kept following the lead of Artpe for no particular reason than that.

“Take more of this! More! I’m sure you can do this longer, right?”

[Humannnnnnnn! I’ll kill you! I’ll kill you!]

“Hmm. Its aggro is still fixed on us.....”

“Artpe?”

There were eight daggers stuck inside the body of the Skeleton Warrior. Artpe still had plenty of throwing weapons left, but he stopped throwing them.

“If we use this method to kill it, it’ll take us around four days.”

“Then are we going to give up? I think we can go out now! I’m not afraid of the soldiers or the goblins!”

After filling her stomach, she had recovered her energy. Maetel spoke in a valiant manner. In reality, it had only been a week, but their growth could almost be called an evolution. They could evade the soldiers, and it wouldn’t be too difficult to fight couple dozen of them and win! However, Artpe shook his head in a decisive manner.

“The probability of us running into an Elite monster is very low. Of course, this bastard is a strong and difficult opponent. However, when we kill it, the reward will be enormous. We can’t give up. This is too good of an opportunity to miss.”

In his previous life, Artpe would have snorted in disdain towards a reward given by a level 60 Elite monster. However, he was a level 24 beginner hero right now, and the only magic spell he knew was Hyper Rubbing. It was stupid to retreat when they had the chance to kill their enemy.

‘Moreover, this Dungeon itself keeps weighing on my mind....’

This place started with level 5 beginner monsters, yet a level 60 Elite monster had appeared on the 6th floor. This beginner’s Dungeon was hard to pin down. What was at the end of this Dungeon? What caused it to be so strange? These thoughts troubled him, so he couldn’t ignore it.

He possessed the Read All Creation ability, so Artpe had always known most of the answers before he could formulate a question. There was no end in sight to this Dungeon, and it interested him. Of course, he couldn’t deny the fact that there was danger here. However, if Artpe and Maetel were able to successfully conquer the Dungeon, they would gain a reward equal to the difficulty of the Dungeon. At the very least, it would be much better than being fattened up like pigs in the castle. It was better than rotting away there.

“So let’s just change our method.”

“Is it finally my time to step forward!?”

“No, you still can’t do anything against it. Just sit there and cheer for me.”

“Heeng.”“

In the end, Artpe’s thoughts led him towards an unexpected destination. It ended at his Hyper Rubbing magic. When he acquired it, he had thought it was a useless magic that could only cause friction. However, the magic had somehow saved them twice in their time of need. He had rubbed to cause changes to the terrain, and he rubbed to increase Maetel’s speed.

Unlike his initial assessment of this magic, this spell wasn’t simple. The most important aspect to pay attention to was the fact that it was able to cause a very large change to the environment compared to the amount of Mana being consumed.

“This is why.... Maybe....”

Artpe looked at the eight daggers embedded deeply into the Skeleton Warrior's skull and other joints. When he checked the Mana within the daggers, his eyes shone.

He wondered if this this plan would really work. Still, they couldn't keep playing games in front of the Dungeon's entrance. He went about this with a devil-may-care attitude. He chanted his spell.

“My will shall manifest focused on the edge of the blade! Hyper Rubbing!”

Chapter 9 – Growth of the Heroes (1)

[Magic can't hurt m..... Koohk!?]

It suffered under his magic before, yet it was replying with the same idiotic answer! Of course, Artpe wouldn't directly apply his Magic on a Skeleton, who was twice his level!

The Magic appeared as if it had been pushed out from the confines of Artpe's body, and he focused on one of the daggers embedded in the Skeleton Warrior. He focused on the blade embedded within the elbow joint of the arm holding the shield. The Hyper Rubbing was focused on the blade, and it was causing enormous friction! Artpe worried the other blades would fall out from the vibration caused by the intense rubbing, so he had to concentrate his power.

[A mere trick was able to damage.....]

"I can't hear you. That trick broke your wide forehead. Why don't you speak a little bit louder!"

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhh!]

The Skeleton Warrior reacted in a violent manner, and it started to move. Finally, Artpe got the reaction he wanted. The elbow joint had received an incredible amount of stimuli from the rubbing, and when the force of the violent movement was added to the mix, the bones started to let out an ominous sound.

A crunch was heard, and the arm was bent backwards in an odd angle!

[I'm a Skeleton! A mere broken bone won't..... Koohk!?]

"You keep following the same pattern in becoming surprised. Aren't you tired of it?"

This was beyond the frictional force that arose from the dagger. The Skeleton Warrior used an enormous amount of power to move

its arm. In the end, it exceeded the threshold of abuse that could be taken by the joint. The joint was completely destroyed as the heavy shield and the arm holding it fell to the Dungeon's hallway!

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhh!]

“You are amazing, Artpe!”

“Give me more compliments!”

“Amazing! You are really incredible!”

He never suspected the Hyper Rubbing could be used to cause damage to a monster! The fact that it could cause incredible amount of friction was no joke. He had manifested the magic by using the weapon as a medium, and the Skeleton Warrior was unable to resist against the attacking using Mana Resistance. Artpe had been able to attack using friction!

He had learned Hyper Rubbing not too long ago, so he wasn't proficient at using the spell. This was why it took so long to achieve the desired effect. However, if he became adept at using this Magic later on, he would be able to achieve ludicrous results!

“Of course, I would achieve better results much faster if I learned other spells during that time!”

Artpe grumbled as he once again focused his Hyper Rubbing on a specific target. He got rid of the shield, so it was time to destroy the arm holding the sword! He was running a bit short on Mana, but if he was able to destroy both arms, he was confident they could win against it. Artpe didn't hold back as he used all his reserve power to command his magic.

[Goo-oooooooooh.....!]

As expected, the Skeleton Warrior realized what Artpe was trying to do, but it couldn't retreat. The rage that was blanketing its body refused to fade away. What should it do? What will allow it to kill the shitty little brat?

The Skeleton Warrior thought hard about its situation. After it agonized over its options, it came up with a single answer. It had watched the little brat do it over and over again. The Skeleton Warrior thought it could somewhat replicate what the brat did.

“Yes, you are doing well. You should move that arm more....”

[Die human!]

“Artpe!”

Artpe had been focused on using the Hyper Rubbing spell. The Skeleton Warrior put all its anger into its roar. At the same time, Maetel moved to knock Artpe out of the way.

“Gg-oooooooooh.”

[Koo-ahhhhhhhh! Damn humans! Damn humaaaaaans!]

Kwahng!

Accompanying the explosive sound, a large sword was embedded into the stairway of the Dungeon’s entrance. It was none other than the Skeleton Warrior’s bastard sword.

“Koo, ah....”

“Maetel?”

Maetel let out a moan. The Skeleton Warrior had thrown the bastard sword with all its might. The sword had grazed her back. Her armor had been completely ripped into pieces, and to make matters worse, it left behind a wound on her back.

“Damn it, Maetel! Maetel!”

He never expected an enemy without the Throw skill to throw its bastard sword towards him! He had put his complete trust in his Read All Creation ability. His error in judgment had almost cost him his life.

He had shown a carelessness that was befitting his title as the weakest of the Four Heavenly Kings! If Maetel had been a bit late,

Artpe would have lost his life.

“Let me see your wound. Hurry!”

“Ah. Oohk.....”

Artpe blamed his stupidity as he looked at Maetel’s wound. A well-placed wound on the back could hamper one’s movement. Fortunately, that wasn’t the case. If she leveled up couple times alongside regular rest, her body would be back to a pristine state. It seemed Maetel was also aware of this fact, so her face wasn’t clouded at all. She had a bright smile on her face.

“I’m alright, Artpe.... I’m just glad Artpe isn’t hurt.”

“You idiot.....”

When Artpe realized Maetel hadn’t been hurt too badly, he truly felt relieved, and he also felt a weird feeling.

If she died, it would deal a very big blow to his dream of living a peaceful life. However, the feeling he had felt was caused by something else..... He must be mistaken. Artpe shook such dumb thoughts away as he raised his head.

He saw the Skeleton Warrior in front of him. It had gone berserk from the Rage type Buff. Its white bones had turned completely red.

The arm holding the shield was on the ground, and the other arm had also fallen off when it couldn’t withstand the shock. The bastard raged as it threw its body forward, but there was an invisible wall blocking it. It blocked its forward progress no matter how it tried to charge forward.

[Gg-oooooooooh! Gg-oooooooooh!]

“Can you move, Maetel?”

“Yes.....”

If Maetel wasn’t injured, he would have finished off the Skeleton Warrior. However, the top priority right now was to level her up,

so she could recover. Of course, Artpe had done most of the work, so not much EXP would go to Maetel. However, this EXP was from killing a very strong opponent. A smaller portion of the EXP would still be enough to level her up!

“Hoo-ooh, hoo-ooh..... All right. I’ll do it.”

Maetel was breathing roughly as she got up. She was about to pull out her rusted sword, but her gaze headed backwards as she looked towards the bastard sword embedded in the stairway. She hesitated before she approached the bastard sword. She extracted it with both hands.

It was made out of heavy metal, and magical energy had been used to manufacture the sword. It was a very heavy sword. However, she swung it easily.

[Human.....]

“I’m sorry. I can’t beat you in a fair fight. However, I’m able to kill you now, so I will kill you.”

She had taken the enemy’s weapon, yet she had taken complete possession of the weapon from just swinging it once or twice. Maetel glared at the Skeleton Warrior as she spoke. It was almost as if she was chanting her words.

“I’ll win and kill anyone to protect Artpe. Because I’m....”

She pulled the hilt of the sword towards her chest. She kept a firm grip as she slightly bent her knees. She leaned her upper body forward.

The Skeleton Warrior raised its leg slightly to face her. Maetel used the burning pain from her back as the starting signal. She kicked off the ground.

“Because I’m! I’m the hero!”

[Koo-ahhh!]

As she let out a short shout, the sword split the air. Her sword

struck at the exact spot where Artpe's dagger was embedded in its skull. The sword cut through the skull, and she broke all its ribs.

If the Skeleton Warrior was in its normal state, it could have resisted against her attack. However, the strike was too much for the current Skeleton Warrior. After its body was broken by the sword, it twitched as if it wanted to fight back. However, the Skeleton Warrior came to a complete stop.

[Gooh, ah ah.... Ah, ah. I...is...is that so?]

Surprisingly, the bisected Skeleton started to say something.

[The will within the unshakable blade has awoken me up from my haze.....]

“Mmm. What.....?”

[That's right, young heroes. Those who run away and never come back are called cowards. However, the ones that come back to win in the end are heroes. You win by fair means or foul. You have carried on your conviction to protect. With my demise, I will open the entrance that will lead to the glory of the heroes.]

“What the hell is the Skeleton saying.....?”

Artpe was flustered as he asked the question, but the Skeleton Warrior no longer opened its mouth. The magical energy from its body drained out as it entered Artpe and Maetel. Their magical energy increased, and the EXP was distributed. The battle was over.

“Hey, wait a moment. If you have something to say to us then you should talk more..... Shit.”

Artpe urgently stood up, and he tried to look at the Skeleton Warrior with his Read All Creation ability. At that moment, its body eroded away. It left behind the cracked large steel shield, Red Bone gauntlet, and several bones that refused to erode away. These bones had too much Magical energy to immediately erode away.

However, the truly surprising event started afterwards. When the Skeleton Warrior was completely gone, the Dungeon started to shake in a fierce manner. After killing the Skeleton Warrior, Maetel had slowly relaxed, but now her eyes were round as she ran towards Artpe.

“Artpe. The Dungeon is.....!”

“Wait a moment. It isn’t collapsing. There are times when a Dungeon goes through a change when one fulfills a specific condition. So right now it....”

He would just be beating a dead horse by repeating the fact that the Dungeon was hiding something. Maybe, this Dungeon might be beyond Artpe’s expectation. Something enormous might lie inside the Dungeon.

If so, what should he do? Should they back out? Or should they move forward, while accepting the risk? If he hadn’t seen Maetel get injured, he wouldn’t have hesitated. He would have advanced, but Artpe couldn’t do that any more.

“Let’s go, Artpe.”

At that moment, Maetel realized he was hesitating, so she spoke to him.

“I want to become stronger. If there comes a time when we have to run away, we’ll run away and win later. However, if possible, I want to win without running away.”

“Maetel.....”

“That is why I want to become stronger.”

Was this really words spoken by a 12 year old girl? Artpe shut his mouth from amazement, but he firmed his resolve when he saw the the unshakable light within Maetel’s eyes.

Currently, she wasn’t repeating words she had heard from someone else. She wasn’t just spouting words in a childish fit. Her

experience within the Dungeon had been short, but a lot had happened during that time. It seemed she had found some purpose, and she wanted to put it into practice.

This was the change that Artpe had wanted to see within her.

“.....yes, let’s go. No matter what shows up, we’ll defeat it. Let bring out everything we can gain from inside the Dungeon.”

“Yes!”

The Read All Creation ability wasn’t perfect, but it was a power that was closest to perfection. If he combined his ability with Maetel’s almost cheat-like talent, they were a perfect pair. They had been perfect a moment ago, and they will be perfect in the future. There was no reason why they shouldn’t go forward.

His confidence was baseless, but he was aware of this fact. Artpe didn’t hesitate. He roughly mussed up Maetel’s hair. She wasn’t showing any signs of feeling pain from her wound. Artpe once again nodded his head then he spoke.

“Before we do that, let’s collect our loot.”

“Yes!”

The reward was more important than the battle! The heroes were growing splendidly in terms of materialistic possessions.

Chapter 10 – Growth of the Heroes (2)

Maetel had been the one to finish off the Skeleton Warrior, but in reality, Artpe had basically killed it on his own. Of course, the act of running from the 6th floor to the 1st floor counted towards the Battle Contribution, but there was no doubt that Artpe would be getting the higher portion of the EXP.

Artpe's level went up by 6 thanks to the EXP. He climbed to level 30. Maetel's level rose by 3, so she was now level 32. The large level gap between them had closed somewhat

“How's your wound, Maetel?”

“My wound has gotten better after I leveled up. If we don't get into a fierce battle, I'm confident it won't overtax me.”

“What about the grass you used before?”

“I still have some.”

Artpe created an emergency medicine with the help of Maetel. After taking off her armor, he treated her remaining wounds. When Maetel exposed her bare skin, her cheeks had turned red. However, Artpe didn't say anything as he had a serious light in his eyes.

“All right. Let's put on some bandages then you can put your clothes back on.”

“Those bandages been left inside the wooden chest for a very long time, so why is it new?”

“This is just the way of the universe. Just accept it.”

“Yes!”

The first aid was done, and the only thing left was the most enjoyable part of a battle. It was time for him to check the loot. Artpe cautiously reached out towards the red bone gauntlet. He read it with his Read All Creation ability, and words started to take

shape.

[Crimson Rage Bone Gauntlet]

[The Undead had been in existence for numerous years, and a good amount of magical energy had been distilled into the bones of the Undead. A powerful rage felt right before its death formed differentiated an artifact. The item is very hard, and when the wearer is able to control one's emotions, one's power will be boosted by 20%. As a price, a fixed portion of one's magical energy will be consumed.]

“Mmmmm.”

“What's wrong, Artpe?”

This drop item pretty much held the essence of the Skeleton Warrior. Artpe let out a sigh of regret as he looked at it. It had the basic requirements of a defensive gear. It had sheer solidity, and while it did consume magical energy, it could increase one's strength by 20%. It was a hard to acquire artifact of this quality when one considered their level.

However....

‘I hoped an artifact that would be of help to me would show up. However, this was a warrior type Elite, so it can't be helped.’

Maetel had already acquired the bastard sword used by the Skeleton Warrior. He checked it with his Read All ability, but the bastard sword didn't have a special option. Still, it was able to absorb magical energy pretty well. It's strength, durability and energy was that of a unique artifact. At the very least, one wouldn't need to change this equipment until level 100.

In this context, the gauntlet would now be in the possession of Maetel. It was hard to do such simplistic comparisons, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she would become twice as strong with this item equipped.

It was good news for him that she would become more powerful.

On the other hand, he couldn't help, but feel like crap. The curse he had possessed in his previous profession as one of the Four Heavenly King had followed him here! It stubbornly stuck to him!

“Tsk. It can't be helped. You should wear this, Maetel.”

“What about Artpe....?”

“If something I need appears, it won't matter if you beg or cry. I'll ruthlessly push you away to keep that item. So don't worry about taking this item.”

“Yes!”

Maetel equipped the bone gauntlet. It was made out of bones, but it was an artifact infused with power magical energy. It reduced in size to fit her limbs. It wrapped tightly around her wrists and fingers.

Of course, if Maetel was unable to handle Mana, she wouldn't have been able to equip this artifact. However, she was a character, who had been able to bring out fire from the wooden branch at level 1. The worries about such a requirement could be omitted.

“Wow. This feels incredibly sturdy! I can feel it protecting me!”

“In truth, the bones are filled with resentment. However, if you feel such a sentiment coming from it, who am I to say otherwise?”

It looked a bit terrifying, but it was something befitting a warrior. Artpe smirked when he saw the animated Maetel, who was excited to have a new equipment. Then he gathered the other red bone fragments. There were a lot of magical energy stored within the bone fragments, so he could probably create something with them.

“Next is... Ah. It's the shield.”

When the Skeleton Warrior held it in its hand, it looked like a one handed bastard sword. However, when the 12 year old Maetel held it up, it looked like a claymore. The sword looked enormous

in her hands. Naturally, she couldn't afford to hold the shield alongside the sword.

"I don't want a shield!"

"This is an artifact too. If you attack an enemy with the corner edge of the shield, it inflicts a weakening curse...."

The Skeleton Warrior hadn't had the chance to use its shield, but this artifact was much better than the bastard sword! The Skeleton Warrior probably blew a fuse when it wasn't able to use the shield. On top of that, a crack had even formed on the shield. Of course, that wasn't Artpe's problem.

Since she couldn't carry it around with her hands, he proposed an idea where he would strap the shield to her back. However, Maetel hated that idea. It would slow her down if the heavy shield was strapped to her back. It would be better for her to preserve her speed, so she could evade the enemy's attack. Still, it was a waste to just throw away the shield....

"Tsk. It can't be helped. It'll be a worse option than you using it, but.... I'll use it."

In the end, Artpe equipped the shield on his back. He had gathered strips of leather as he went through the Dungeon, and he had infused Mana to strengthen them. He created a hole on each side of the shield, and he threaded the strip of leather through the holes. One end of the strap was brought over his left shoulder and the other end was brought underneath his right armpit. He tied it off. Artpe looked like a turtle.

Maetel gently screwed up her eyes as she looked at Artpe move around.

"You are usually slow, but now you became much slower."

"There is a reason why I'm carrying it like this. I'll move around slowly, but at the most crucial moment, I'll unravel the straps. Boom! The heavy shield will let out a loud sound as it falls to the

floor. It will startle our opponent.”

“Aht! That’s amazing! It’ll look very cool!”

“If I drop it on a surface that breaks into fragments like marble slabs, the visual effect would be twice as more effective. You should remember this.”

“Yes!”

He had gathered everything that needed to be gathered. They had to once again travel from the 1st floor to the 6th floor. On the way down, they had to defeat the losers, who had given up on chasing them. These were the Skeletons, who broke away from the Skeleton Warrior. It would be easy to crush them, and the two of them tried to do just that.

They tried.

“Huh.”

“Something has changed, Artpe.”

“You are right. Something has clearly changed.”

Everything was the same until the 5th floor. It was the Dungeon they remembered. The staircases were still broken, and the Skeletons were heaped up in a pile like pieces of trash to bridge the floors. The poor Skeletons were barely alive.

As an act of mercy and a way to increase the party’s level, they killed all the Skeletons in the pile as they descended each floor. However, when they stood in front of the staircase leading towards the 6th floor, the two heroes finally realized something was wrong.

“This.... It is made out of marble.”

Artpe mumbled in an agitated manner. Artpe took in the sight of a long and wide staircase. He was sure he had destroyed this staircase before when he went up to the 5th floor. Moreover, the staircase had evolved!? It was now made out of marble. Then there was the large hallway that was absent from his memories!

“Marble? So Artpe is going to drop your shield here?”

“I’ve only been carrying this for an hour.”

The Skeleton Warrior, who was basically the ruler of the 6th floor, had been killed. It seemed the Dungeon had gone through a fundamental change. He regretted the fact that he hadn’t been able to use his Read All Creation ability on the Skeleton Warrior before it died.

“I’m looking at it with my Read All Creation ability, but.... That’s to be expected.”

His Read All Creation ability was able to reveal all secrets, but he was just observing the marbles that made up the Dungeon. He couldn’t gain all information regarding the Dungeon through this method. It might be possible if he went into the deepest part of the Dungeon to observe the Dungeon’s Core. Maetel carefully asked a question as she looked at Artpe’s dismayed expression.

“What shall we do, Artpe?”

“We’ve already decided what we’ll do. We are moving forward.”

“.....yes!”

“However, you shouldn’t relax too much. The traps are now gone, but that might actually mean....”

He was now afraid of the monsters that’ll appear inside the Dungeon from now on. The traps weren’t being deployed to whittle down the adventurers anymore. It meant that there would be numerous monsters powerful enough to take down the adventurers without the help of traps.

“I don’t care what comes out. I’ll most definitely protect Artpe.”

“You don’t need to put on such a grim expression... Whatever.”

They hardened their resolves as they descended down the marble staircase. They entered a completely different 6th floor, and there weren’t any monsters in the front. It was the same in the middle

part. They kept checking their surrounding as they nervously went down the hallway. After an indeterminate amount of time, they had reached the location where they had met the Elite Skeleton Warrior.

Up until now, the marble floor held nothing. However, four white skulled Skeletons popped up from the floor. They were colored the same as the marble floor.

[Do you want to go forward?]

[Do you want to retreat?]

[Do you want to protect?]

[Do you want to cut?]

“Step back, Artpe!”

“I’m already doing that, so you don’t have to say it!”

They were mere Skeletons, yet they were wearing pretty good leather armor. They also carried gleaming longswords. They moved as if they had coordinated a plan beforehand. They approached Maetel from both sides. Artpe used his Read All Creation ability, and he moaned when he realized the monsters were all close to being level 50.

“The difficulty of the Dungeon rose sharply.....!”

“It’s all right... I can do this now!”

Maetel used her ridiculously fast reflexes and her good eyesight. She was doing it at a very slim margin, but she deflected all four longswords in order. Then she retreated a little bit, and she hardened her expression.

“Hmmp!”

In the next moment, the Bone Gauntlet let out a faint red light, and it added strength to Maetel’s slim arms. Artpe had explained to her that a boost in her emotions could bring out the ability of the artifact. However, he had never expected her to be able to control

her emotions so freely!

He was well aware of her talent, yet even he was overwhelmed by this sight.

“You.....”

“I’m going!”

[You move forward.]

[You try to protect someone.]

[Your mental vision is still narrow.]

[You have enough courage to be recognized.]

“Shuuuuuuut upppppppp!”

Maetel bravely swung her bastard sword, and it impacted on the longsword of the Skeleton nearest her. The bastard sword easily broke the longsword in half.

She used her momentum to plant her right foot into the ground as she spun. She struck the Skeleton’s body with her forearm. When the Skeleton felt the weight of its longsword disappear, it lost its balance. The strike sent the Skeleton towards its comrades, who was also swinging their longswords. The longswords impacted on the body of the first Skeleton.

However, unlike the Elite Skeleton Warrior from before, these Skeletons gave praise even as they suffered under her attack.

[You have the wisdom to use the enemy’s power against them.]

[Your ability to make quick judgement is admirable.]

“Eh-eet.”

Artpe wouldn’t just standby as the bastards gave their monologue! When the Skeletons got in each other’s way, Artpe didn’t miss the opportunity. He attacked them.

He was overflowing with weapons he could throw! He had used all the Mana he had gained when he reached level 30. He had

reinforced the daggers and bone fragments. He threw them towards the Skeletons, who were attacking Maetel. He stopped them in their tracks.

[Kooh-ahk!?!]

[However, you don't play fair. You hide in safety as you stick out your tongue!]

"The four of you are attacking her, yet you are talking about fairness? Are you trying to test the hero or are you trying to scout for the Demon King's army? Huh?"

In his previous life, he had been exceptionally skilled. After entering this Dungeon, he had only done one thing. His ability to throw items were on a whole different level now.

His thrown weapons all embedded themselves in their weak points. His timing was exquisite. He was able to stop the movements of his enemies. In terms of throwing skills, he was so skilled that a thief might not be needed for this party.

His main job was supposed to be a magician!

'When I became a hero, it seems I unnecessarily picked up abilities of other disciplines....'

It was a good thing, so why was he sighing?

He was sure of this, but if he checked his Read All Creation ability, his throw skill probably exceeded level 8. It was something very incredible, since Maetel's Swordsmanship skill remained at level 6!

[I accept my loss, but before you defeat the others.... Kook]

"One down!"

While Artpe became confused about his own identity, Maetel had finally taken down a Skeleton. One was defeated, yet the EXP of the two heroes didn't rise.

"All right. Let's take care of the rest...."

[Your tribulation will start now.]

“They are speaking some bullshit, Maetel... Huh?”

At that moment, Artpe’s Read All Creation ability was activated.

It was as if the fallen Skeleton hadn’t existed in the first place. The fallen Skeleton melted into the void, and the energy from it was split threeways. It flowed into the three remaining Skeletons. As this occurred, Artpe was seeing a live update on what was occurring.

[Experience Record Strength Mana Transfer]

[Evolution Test Task Status]

At a glance, the words looked to have nothing to do with each other. It looked to be a list of words. However, it was enough of a clue for Artpe to realize what was going on!

“Shit....! Step aside for a little bit, Maetel! The stone and nature proceeds to return to stone and nature! It will be beyond one’s reach!”

He desperately chanted his magic spell. The three Skeletons were attacking a bit faster than before when the marble floor turned slippery. They fell to the floor. Artpe didn’t stop there. He started unraveling the leather strap tying the shield to his back.

“Artpe!?”

“Didn’t I tell you how I’ll use this earlier, Maetel?”

“Yes.”

“I lied!”

Artpe grabbed the end of the strap and he swung it. High quality Mana was emitted from his heart, and it flowed down through the strap. The Mana flowed into the shield. This task was arduous for him even if he was using both hands. In a flash, he sent the shield flying forward.

The shield flew in an exquisite trajectory. Artpe's Mana within the shield was letting out a ominous light. the Skeletons were getting up when the shield hit them.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhk!]

[You are cheap! You are a coward!]

"I'm less cheap than you guys, you assholes!"

Artpe had reinforced the shield with his magical energy, and it had brilliantly caused a curse to be afflicted on the Skeletons. It was a simple curse that slowed down the movement of the enemies, but it was like a blessing that allowed them to turn the table of the battle! This was especially true when one considered Maetel's quick movements.

Maetel's eyes shone as she tried to finish them off. Artpe became frightened as he stopped her.

"Don't kill them!"

"Why?"

"If we kill them, the other monsters will become strengthened. A Record Link was placed on all the monsters within this Dungeon!"

"Huh.....?"

Maetel didn't understand Artpe's words. She didn't comprehend how serious of a situation this was. The 'Record Link' was a sophisticated trap that would unfold from now on. The thought it made him grind his teeth!

"Anyways, the curse was strengthened, and I was able to lay it on them. You should charge in and beat them within an inch of their lives!"

"All right!"

[Kook, cowards. You should attempt this trial in a fair and square....]

“Shut up!”

While Maetel beat them to half death, Artpe turned around to look at the hallway. A steel door had appeared behind them, and the hallway behind them was hidden. When he confirmed the existence of this enormous door, he grinded his teeth.

It was as he had expected. It was impossible to back out now once they had started this.

‘I did make a resolve to break and steal whatever is in front of us.....’

Artpe looked forward, and he saw five new Skeletons appear down the hallway. They were all close to being level 50.

“Son of a bitch! At the very least, give us EXP!”

The heroes had fallen into a trial that was like a swamp. They wouldn’t be able to finish this easily.

Chapter 11 – Growth of the Heroes (3)

Record Link.

It was classified as an ancient magic. It was a great magic that was representative of spells that were very troublesome to activate and maintain.

If one wanted to activate this magic, one needed souls and bodies that had similar mana pattern, skills and special characteristics. The resonance created allowed them to easily identify each other's intent. Moreover, if one of them died, all the power within its soul and body would be transferred to the others through the link.

In theory, if one killed the parts linked to the whole, the overall capability of the group would remain the same.

Up to this point, it sounded as if it was a technique that would allow one to create the strongest organization in this continent. However, the prerequisite of finding beings that were similar in mana pattern, techniques and special characteristics was fiendishly hard. In truth, no one was able to activate such magic throughout history.

Even if one was successful in activating it, there would be a horrific penalty if the will of one was slightly out of sync with the others. It would cancel the magic spell, and the horrible side effects would be shared by all. This was why this spell was designated as a forbidden spell throughout this continent. It was simply labeled as being an insane magic.

[Goo-ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

[Do this fair and square!]

[I want to be of help to my comrade, but I am unable to do that!]

These mad Skeletons had been linked through the forbidden spell. He never expected to find such a secret technique being used in a Dungeon placed in the countryside. Artpe was extremely

shocked.

“Maetel! They can recover from broken bones, so I want you to completely crush their arms and legs! I want you to avoid killing them at all costs!”

“Understood! Eh-eet! Eh-eeeet!”

[Koo-ahhhhhhhh!]

Of course, he was taken aback by all of this, but he was able to keep his shock separate from what was going on in the battle.

The most important trait for the Demon King army’s Four was composure! The second most important trait was also composure! The best way to maintain composure was to go through all the scenarios beforehand. One had to think about what had yet to occur, and the consequences of each scenario. Composure was for those who planned ahead!

First, Artpe and Maetel made it impossible for the three Skeletons to move. After taking care of them, they confronted the five Skeletons running towards them.

“Bring it on!”

[Damn it! They aren’t doing the trial in a fair manner...]

“Huh? Five Skeletons gathered here to attack two children. I’m having a hard time taking those words seriously when it is coming from you guys.”

[.....]

The Skeletons looked taken aback when they saw their comrades roll around the floor in a pitiful state. However, they couldn’t do anything for them. The Record Link’s biggest restriction was the inability to attack one’s comrades.

“If we leave them in a state where they can’t die, we can block them from strengthening themselves. If we hadn’t known Record Link was being used, we would have been screwed. However, all

tactical magic is useless in front of my Read All Creation ability!”

“As expected, Artpe is amazing!”

[Cowards!]

“You guys are almost past level 50, yet you are attacking us as a group! I don’t want to hear such words from you guys!”

The Skeletons had never expected two children under level 30 to have defeated the Elite Skeleton Warrior! Still, how could they start such a test in a ruthless manner! Which country’s customs were they following!

Artpe followed two cherished rules. First, he strove for tranquility. Secondly, he strove for survival. It was already much too late to follow his first rule. This was why he wouldn’t hesitate to cheat for survival!

“Break!”

“You have to cancel your buff before you run out of Mana! Control your emotions!”

“I know!”

She boosted her emotions to activate the strengthening option provided by the gauntlet. This was why she sounded more strained than usual.

Of course, it would be impossible for her to fight straight up against the level 50 Skeletons. It was self-evident that the buff from the gauntlet was allowing her to do so.....

‘She’s really amped up. Will she be able to terminate the buff when needed? If not.....’

One had to always keep in mind that Mana was being consumed to maintain the buff. If one wasn’t able to calm one’s heart, the buff would remain active until one’s Mana ran out. When one was out of Mana, it started to consume one’s stamina. This was the reason why emotion type buffs were dangerous and tricky. If one

overdid it, the buff could cause the user's death.

It wouldn't even be funny if the heroes died in such a trivial place. Artpe checked that more Skeletons were coming towards them. He hardened his resolve as he extended his Mana Thread. The only spell he possessed was Hyper Rubbing, and he had to get out of this danger by using what he possessed.

"I've taken down two of them!"

"You are beating them to the inch of their lives to make them incapable of battle. Let's coin a name for this action. Let us say we are shagging them. So you shagged two of them."

"I shagged three! No, I shagged four!"

The struggles of the heroes had reached incredible heights! Artpe grabbed onto the leather strap as he sent the shield flying towards all directions. He inflicted the curse on the new Skeletons, who were trying to join the ongoing battle. Artpe had infused his power of Mana into the strap, so the tensile strength of the strap was high. He was also able to extend the length of the strap, so he didn't need to worry about losing the shield!

"This isn't magic. It feels like I'm in a circus.... Shit."

Still, the actual number of enemies unable to recklessly attack Maetel had grown to a significant number. The most surprising fact about shield's curse was the fact that it could be 'stacked'. The speed of the Skeleton became noticeably slower when it was hit multiple times with the shield. Their slow speed meant they were being taken down quickly.

Artpe started to revise his opinion. Maybe the biggest treasure left behind by the Skeleton Warrior wasn't the gauntlet or the bastard sword. It might be the shield. This was also why the Skeletons refused to acknowledge Artpe as a 'challenger' for their test.

[You are a coward, who hides behind a woman! We should kill

such a male first!]

[He doesn't have the right to take this test! Punish him! Punish him!]

“Nooooooooobody will lay a finger on Artpe!”

Ah, they were screwed. Maetel was supposed to calm herself down, but their words made her emotions spiral out of control!

She possessed supreme talent. She possessed a superior body compared to beings of same level as her. She possessed an overwhelming amount of magical energy compared to others. Still, it would be dangerous for her to maintain her buff at this pace.

Despite this fact, she bravely leapt around as she took down the Skeletons....

‘She won't be able to last long.... Her ability is great, but she's committing all the common mistakes committed by beginner users.’

Her immature nature right now suited the hero's personality, but she was with him now. Artpe wouldn't allow were to act in such naive manner. However, there were too many Skeletons running towards them from the other side of the hallway. He didn't have the time to lecture her.

‘If so....’

The next best option was to make sure her Mana didn't run out. This would prevent the buff's side effect from manifesting within her.

So what was his options? Mana potion?

Unfortunately, this Dungeon didn't drop expensive potions that would allow her to recover her Mana.

What about Mana recovery herb? Of course, there were rare cases where Mana herb grew in the corners of a Dungeon. However, this Dungeon hadn't had any.

This meant that he had to consider his last option. It was Mana transfer. Artpe was overflowing with Mana.(He possessed Magical talent that would never be seen again in the human race. His body was ridiculous.) He just had to find a way to transfer it to Maetel.

This would allow Maetel to maintain her buff, and he wouldn't have to waste Mana on a spell like Hyper Rubbing. Of course, if this was easily done, he would have done it already.

‘There are magic that allows one to transfer Mana to others, but I haven't learned those spells yet.’

In the end, he would have to directly control his Mana to be able to inject it into Maetel. At this rate, Artpe might develop a new Mana Control Class never before seen in history. As he mulled over the new questions about his own identity, he grabbed a Mana Thread with his free hand. His other hand was holding onto the leather strap of the shield.

“Maetel! I want you to decrease your movement radius!”

“All right! I shagged two!”

Maetel shouted with great vigor. She swung her bastard sword as it impacted three Skeletons. Their bodies were severely damaged. It made one think that they would be better off dead. In a short amount of time, she had quickly gotten used to using the bastard sword. This truth was self evident.

Artpe shot out his Mana Thread towards Maetel, and it gently touched her shoulder. Artpe had never tried Mana transfer before, so he focused his mind as he tried to inject his Mana into her. Sure enough, the Mana wasn't easily absorbed by Maetel. It dissipated in the middle of the process.

He had delivered Mana to Maetel, but it hadn't bolstered her Mana reserve. His magical energy had basically gave her a shoulder massage!

“I shagged three again! Eh-hee hee. You are tickling me, Artpe.”

“Stop liking it so much. You are annoying me.”

Artpe continuously threw and received his shield with one hand. (He didn't know the cause behind it, but once the shield returned, it was sent out at a higher speed and strength than the previous throw. He was coming close to taking down as many enemies as Maetel.) He used his other hand to continuously send the Mana Thread towards Maetel.

Fail, fail and fail.

If things progressed as is, he wouldn't become more proficient at Mana transfer. He would become more proficient at giving Maetel a massage!

“Artpe is really amazing!”

“The fact that your heart is always in the right place makes this much more annoying!”

He couldn't waste his Mana like this.

Would it be more advantageous to take down the Skeletons using Hyper Rubbing?

Artpe was having such thoughts as he turned his head. The number of broken Skeletons were rising. There were almost 50 of them. It was at this moment when he realized something. The more shocking news was that over 20 Skeletons had appeared once again at the end of the hall!

“What the heck! You guys should just come at us all at once!”

[I'm coming for you.]

[I'm also coming for you.]

[We are coming for you.]

It was as if they had been waiting for Artpe's words. He watched as the Skeletons surged towards him. When he confirmed this sight, he politely took back his words.

“No. Don’t come here. You don’t have to come toward us.”

[We’ll take up our bows to kill the coward!]

“Oh shit.”

“Koo-ooh.... I won’t lose! I’ll protect Artpe!”

Skeletons, who were able to attack from a distance, had appeared. It was a sufficiently demoralizing sight. To add insult to injury, Maetel’s Mana was starting to show signs of running out! A good amount of red light was starting to emanate in vaporous form from her body. It was evidence that the skill was consuming her stamina instead of her magical energy.

“You are going to kill yourself, Maetel! You idiot!”

“I’ll end this soon. I’ll end all of them. I won’t allow any of you to approach Artpe!”

[You cannot differentiate between bravery and foolhardiness. You aren’t qualified to be a hero either.]

[You are unqualified. An unqualified person cannot leave this test alive.]

[It has been a long time since anyone had challenged us. It makes us happy, but we have to do our work.]

“Maetel! Eeek! I told you to stop, Maetel!”

“Koo-oohk, Koo-ooh-ahhhhhhhh!”

Artpe kept yelling at Maetel to cancel her buff, but Maetel wasn’t showing any signs of letting up. In truth, her actions weren’t wrong. Her level hadn’t risen, and the gauntlet’s buff was the only reason why she was able to fight head on with the Skeletons!

When the buff ended, it would be the end for the the two of them. Instead of retreating, they had chosen to go forward. They had acted with reckless bravado.

‘Shit. This won’t do. I can’t transfer my Mana to her. Moreover,

it would be foolhardy to expect her to learn Mana Drain or Stamina Drain as if it was a miracle.... Fuck these inflexible Skeletons. What shall I do.... Uh?’

This was the moment when he found a clue that would help him solve this situation. He hadn’t discovered anything new, but he caught sight of the Record Link’s Mana stem connecting the Skeletons. It was the cause of their current troubles, and he suddenly saw it in new light.

‘The Record Link is a spell that synchronizes everything. Of course, this spell moves towards completion as the members of the Record Link is killed. Isn’t the activation method of this spell what I’m trying to accomplish?’

He had a moment of enlightenment. Of course, this was possible only because Artpe had a cheat-like ability called the Read All Creation. Artpe had to get out of this ridiculous situation, and his brain moved in a flexible manner to come up with a solution.

‘If I do this right, I’ll be able to do it.’

The main idea behind the Record Link was a connection established using a specific resonance frequency. There was a big commonality between Artpe and Maetel that could be used as a medium. They were the only two people in the world, who had the Hero Class. This was something they shared between the two of them.

‘The Hero Class is an intrinsic characteristic that trumps all others. It’s possible. I’ll be able to do this..’

Artpe’s eyes were shining brightly. At that moment, he realized he had learned a new magic.

He had thought acquiring skills, which was incongruent with one’s level, was something only a genius like Maetel was allowed to do. However, he had been wrong. He wasn’t sure if his prior knowledge and observations helped in the process, but Artpe was

able to join Maetel's company as being someone capable of creating new skills!

“Maetel! Your senses might expand a little bit, and your Mana will become amplified. Stay focused!”

“I understand....!”

As expected, her answer was always cheerful. She was well aware of the fact that her stamina was being consumed right now, but she refused to end her buff. Maetel was still bravely fighting off dozens of Skeletons.

Artpe was blocking the long range attacks using his shield, but if the situation remained the same, the two of them would be wiped out. He could guarantee it. He had to use his magic before it was too late.

“We are connected by traveling the same road. Reveal the line that connects us. Our sights view the same enemies. My rage shall become her rage, and it shall descend.”

[The coward is trying to use a weird trick once again.]

[We have to stop him. We have to stop him, but....]

“Artpe.... You can't touch him.....!”

Her anger kept rising everytime the Skeletons tried to aim for Artpe. Now it just took them mentioning Artpe's name to set her off. Her eyes were raised sharply, and she was more scarier than an evil spirit as she swung her sword.

There was a red fog emanating from her entire body now. She wasn't just consuming her Stamina anymore. She had learned a skill that was deadly and horrifying compared to all the Skills she had learned up until now.

[Maetel]

[Level : 32]

[Berserk Lv1]

‘Somehow I had a feeling she would... In the end, she learned the Berserk skill.’

It was an emblematic skill used by the Berserkers. It was the worst type of mental skill one could learn. The Berserk skill would make one kill everyone. It didn’t matter if one was an ally or a foe.

There was no level restriction in learning it, and it didn’t exist in the form of a Skill Book. The user had to fulfill requirement that were close to being diabolical to be able to learn it. This was why it was very rare to see it in action, yet Maetel had just learned it.

The Bone Gauntlet boosted the strength of the user as the user’s emotions was raised. The Berserk skill dealt with a single emotion called rage. It increased one’s attack by decreasing one’s defense. It was a very rare self-buff skill. Of course, the side effect was so much worse than the ones given by the bone gauntlet. It was so severe that it made one shudder.

“You’ll be fine even with that skill. Link the Mana!”

At that moment, Artpe finally completed his spell. This particular Mana Thread was very fine. One couldn’t even draw a comparison with the Mana Threads he had created before. This thread was letting out the five cardinal colors, and it created a direct line between Artpe’s heart and Maetel’s heart. The Skeletons couldn’t prevent the connection from forming.

“Ah.”

In the next moment, Maetel spoke in a peculiar voice. Artpe smiled when he confirmed that his magic had worked. The Skeletons shook when they saw the change in her spirit. They held an overwhelming number advantage, yet they started to slowly retreat.

“Artpe....is the best.”

Maetel mumbled her words. Artpe’s overflowing Mana was being poured into Maetel’s body in its entirety.

The stamina that had already been consumed did not recover, but her body was granted an extreme amount of Mana that her body wasn't allowed to possess at this stage. Her body temporarily took the next step forward.

[That person stole our secret technique.]

[No, that is.... It might be superior than our technique.]

[My god.... They are true heroes.]

[They are qualified to be heroes! They are brilliantly proving this fact!]

“Even if you acknowledge us now, you are too late.”

Maetel raised her head, and her eyes were sparkling. She hunched forward. All the muscles in her body was tense. She looked like a panther about to pounce its prey. The powerful magical energy and the overwhelming power of the Berserk Skill reconciled with each other to surround her entire body.

“I won't let you all run away!”

It was hard to call what happened next as a battle. It would be more appropriate to say they were hunted down by her.

Chapter 12 – Growth of the Heroes (4)

[I've already acknowledged.... Kuhk!]

[We'll back off for now, and the others will test....!]

“I told you I won't let you guys run awayyyyyyyyyy!”

Artpe's Mana was being shared with Maetel, and she was like a predator that didn't get tired.

The Skeletons couldn't gauge Maetel's ability using her level. Still, they managed to come to the right decision. They expressed their intent on giving up on the battle. However, it was way too late to do so. Maetel's rage refused to diminish when she saw their shameless behavior. It actually increased it.

“You guys originally planned on killing Artpe! Now you want to admit defeat and retreat? You guys are mean. You are all very mean! I almost lost Artpe! You guys want to end this with just a single speech! You guys are really really mean!”

[There's no point. We told you there is no point in going further than this!]

[The hero's rage... Your rage will put you on a path of no return.....]

“You guys are the one, who will be put on a path of no return! Eeyahhhh!”

When one saw Maetel's outer appearance, one would assume she'll have a hard time lifting the huge bastard sword. However, the sword was moving freely in the hands of Maetel.

The white blade didn't discriminate between vertical and horizontal swings. She was like a salmon wading up a fierce current. She mercilessly sliced and crushed the bodies of the Skeletons.

Fortunately, she still had enough awareness to realize that she

must not kill any of them. She was basically holding onto a single thread of her reason.

It was something very hard to do even for Berserkers, who lived many years alongside their rage. However, Maetel was doing it.

“You are running around wildly like an idiot.....”

Artpe recovered his Mana, and he focused on sharing it with Maetel. Of course, Artpe’s Mana was on a different class compared to Maetel’s Mana. Even after supplying Mana required to sustain Maetel’s Berserk state, he was still overflowing with Mana.

After he became somewhat confident in maintaining the link, he gathered the sharp bone fragments in his surrounding. As he maintained the Mana link with her, he strengthened the bone fragments with Mana. Then he started attacking them from distance. Each throw incapacitated a Skeleton.

The two heroes once again started an airtight attack. They were facing a group of enemies that had increased in size by several dozen magnitude!

[I have no idea what is going on.]

[Why are there two heroes? Did these two really show up in the same era?]

[Our role is to conduct the test. That is it. It is our duty to guide them to the next location then we will back off.]

[However, at this rate....]

She dismantled the limbs of the most talkative Skeleton first. Maetel’s bastard sword was swung like a club, and she sent the disabled Skeletons into the corner of the hallway.

There was a pile consisting of 90 Skeletons.

Artpe made sure the Skeletons couldn’t recover. He mainly used his shield to dice them up. The shield was connected to Artpe by a strap reinforced by Mana, and it freely sliced through the air. It

was like a boomerang.

[This is like....]

As the two heroes continued their dominance, a particular Skeleton was hit by Maetel's sword on its cheek bone. It let out a groan that wasn't actually a groan.

[It is as if we are the ones being tested.]

[This runs contrary to the point of this test.]

[Thus.]

[We will make changes.]

“Oh man. What is it again.... Huh?”

At that moment, the Mana density within the Dungeon suddenly increased.

The hallway rolled as it widened. It became unfathomably large. Then he felt the Undead Mana from the other side increase in an uncontrolled manner. The walls kept contracting than expanding, and the flow of Mana within the Dungeon quickened.

“Kyahhh!”

An enormous change was occurring to the entire Dungeon. Maetel was taken aback. She broke out of the effects of her Berserk skill, and she turned to look at Artpe.

“What is going on, Artpe.....?”

“...I get it now. I've been firmly under a delusion.”

He wasn't like Maetel. He wasn't afraid of the unknown. Before one knew it, a smile had appeared on Artpe's lips.

If a Demon, who was much more proficient in magic than him was here, this Demon would have realized it much earlier. However, it couldn't be helped, since he was the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings.

Still, he had realized it before it was too late. That would be

enough. He could straighten this out. This was what the power possessed by Artpe was for.

“The change of the Dungeon is ongoing. No, the Dungeon itself is trapped within a magic spell.”

Who labeled this as a beginner’s Dungeon? This Dungeon had been made to look sloppy on purpose. This was a genuine Dungeon. This couldn’t have been formed naturally, and it wasn’t something a regular person could make.

[We give the test.]

[If they are better... If they are more extraordinary... If they are overpowered... If they are geniuses...]

[We will send out everyone. We just have to test them again.]

The sound of marching could be heard. Several dozen level 50 Skeletons appeared from down the hallway. There were countless number of Skeletons readied behind them.

They came from the front, back, left and right. The hallway kept expanding, and it broke down the walls and stairways. The dead sleeping below were all awoken.

Every one of them were connected through the Record Link.

This was a very severe ordeal for beginner hero, who barely eclipsed level 30. However, she just fixed the grip on her bastard sword.

“It’ll be alright, Artpe. I’ll protect you. I’ll crush them all. ”

Her emerald colored eyes didn’t shake at all. She was too brilliant and strong to be seen as a mere 12 year old girl.

Ah ah. Maybe this was the point where she would open her eyes as a true hero. Artpe grinned when he saw this, and he raised his gaze.

“Yes. Someone had planned all of this. I don’t know which era this person was from.....”

The Skeletons kept bringing up the subject of heroes. At this point, they were acting in a brutal and annoying manner as if they were bullies. Aside from their actions, he was sure they wanted to check the qualification of the heroes. This gave him a good idea, who might have designed this Dungeon.

“I’ll crush you all so thoroughly that you won’t be able to be recycled. I’ll take everything that is yours.”

His purple eyes contained the power of the Read All Creation ability. His eyes let out a light as he surveyed his surrounding.

A large scale ancient magic was protecting the entirety of the Dungeon. Their level of power wouldn’t be able to do anything against it. It was a magic spell that changed depending on the situation. It changed to put the challengers up against a wall.

This was why it was time for Artpe to step forward. This was why they stood a chance of succeeding.

“Every magic has a structure, and all structures have weaknesses. Of course, it’ll be difficult to instantaneously drive a wedge between the magic spell to break it.....”

This magic continuously acted on a large space, and if even one thing went out of whack, the spell would come crumbling down.

Of course, it was known amongst mages that it was impossible to find the structure and the cracks within an ever changing magic spell. This widely accepted idea was turned on its head when Artpe Hirtana Kelduke of the Four Heavenly Kings appeared.

However, Artpe’s name wasn’t known to those in this era.

This was why no magic had yet been prepared to counteract against Artpe!

‘Huh? Wait a moment. What happened to the me that should exist right now in this era? Am I absent or was I swapped with someone else? If that isn’t the case, then....’

In a flash, he had a terrifying idea, but this wasn't the time to mull over those thoughts. He shook his head to expel all thoughts unrelated to their survival. Afterwards, he checked up on Maetel.

“Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhhh! I can do this! I can do this!”

[Koo-gah-ahhhhhhhhk!]

Maetel didn't back down from the Skeletons coming from all sides. She ran wild. Artpe's reserve of Mana was too vast compared to his level, so her Mana usage didn't even make a dent in his Mana supply.

She didn't know how to retreat, and she had no fear. Instead of shying away from the large number, she harassed them. She restricted the movement of the Skeletons.

It was as if she had been trained in personal and group battles for several dozen years. She was adept at it. The fact that she was doing all of this on instinct was the most startling fact in all of this.

“I won't back away.... I won't forgive you guys....!”

[Koo-ahhhhhhhk!]

[We need more! There aren't enough of us!]

Above all, her sword strikes were slowly getting sharper and heavier.

Aside from the need to maintain the Berserk and the Bone Gauntlet, she wasn't using any Mana. She was able to lightly dodge the Skeletons' swords, which were infused with their Mana. Each of her sword swing were able to crush the bones of opponents, who were 20 levels higher.

She made a lie of the common phrase that said a difference in level meant a difference in battle capability. Currently, a hero had been born on this continent, and she was easily jumping over her limits. It was as if she was mocking those who had to live within the restriction of levels.

Even if the Skeletons increased in number, they couldn't overcome against a single slender girl. They grudgingly had to acknowledge her growth, and they despaired.

[Strong..... She shouldn't be this strong, yet she is too powerful. In a situation where she should be retreating, she chose to charge straight ahead!]

[She shouldn't be allowed to grow right now, so why is she growing stronger!]

[Maetel]

[Level – 32]

[Swordsmanship Lv7]

[Battle Step Lv6]

[Perception Lv8]

“Why? Her skills have increased.”

He was genius, who learned the Berserk skill after getting a taste of the Bone Gauntlet's buff effect. She was in the early level 30s, yet she had achieved level 7 on a weapon skill. Achievements such as these were no longer surprising.

Artpe checked and confirmed that Maetel was barely receiving any wounds. He determined he didn't need to monitor her constantly.

“For a little while, you should hold them off by yourself, Maetel. I think I'll be able to change our situation by a little bit.”

“I believe in Artpe. Artpe can do it.”

Even if he hadn't received her encouragement, he was confident he could do this...

Still, he felt a surge of energy from somewhere, and he wondered if the Link magic was the cause.

“Alright. Trust in me.”

Artpe lifted the corner of his mouth. As he laughed, he raised both his hands. The shield connected to the Mana strap rose into the air, and it started revolving around his body.

Even if he wasn't able to inflict the curse unto the Skeletons, it was still possible for him to defend against their attacks.

"If a powerful magic spell was the only thing important about a mage, he would be called by the name of his strongest magic. However, there was a reason why mages don't use that naming convention. The distinct name of a mage and their various talents they possess has importance....."

A mage's true worth didn't come out when facing a single enemy using fire or ice.

A single gesture could change the tide of battle. A mage was only recorded in history when one could change the direction of the battle by oneself.

"I see it. I can see everything. I know where I'll have to tweak....."

The Dungeon was trying to compensate for the fact that there were two heroes. The standard requirement for this Dungeon was for one challenger, so the Dungeon was merging into a single floor to contend with them.

These Skeletons were only at level 50, but the ones afterwards would be higher in level. Moreover, they would also be connected through the Record Link.

It would be the end if he let that happen. Even if Maetel was a genius who could ignore level differences, there was a limit.

What should he do? He had sufficiently strengthened the abilities of Maetel. It would also be impossible for Artpe to personally grow right now.

This was why he had to turn the enemies and the battlefield on its head.

“If this was a regular structure, this should be impossible to do. However, the entire Dungeon is being controlled by a spell, so this is a different situation.”

Artpe’s purple eyes shone as they started to let out an odd luminescence. He could see all the Mana flowing from the Dungeon’s wall, hallway and ceiling.

He could see where they met, and he saw how it curved to change the structure of the Dungeon. He also could see how the Mana was being used over the monsters!

“Good.”

He had found it. Mana threads shot out from the tips of Artpe’s ten fingers. The Skeletons knew he was up to no good, but they also knew that they were lacking in ability to be able to touch the boy.

It was the damndest thing. Before Artpe stepped forward, he had made thorough preparations. No one would be able to interfere with him.

This was the result of the struggle of trying to escape the fact of being the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings! He had always been sacrificed first before. However, he had had transitioned into being a hero now. The results he had gained from before was bearing fruit in a brilliant manner!

“This is easier than establishing the Mana Link. The fact that I can see your magic should be a terrifying reality for you guys.... I’ll show it to you now. ”

The 10 strands of Mana Threads from his fingers extended out towards the surrounding. The Mana Threads reached specific locations on the Dungeon’s hallway, ceiling and floor. Then the sharp ends of the Mana Thread started to bore in.

The vibration that was shaking the Dungeon became worse.

“Here, here and there.....”

[W...what are you doing!?!]

[Do you really think such a weak move could sever our connection!? Impossible! That is impossible!]

“You are right. It is impossible. I’ve barely reached level 30, and it isn’t as if I can cancel such a fucking old and large magic spell.”

However, there was one thing he could do.

Artpe let out an evil smile as he swung his two hands. The 10 Mana Threads undulated as they surged towards the wall, hallway and ceiling. They were absorbed into various locations.

[.....?]

[There was a change... No, there wasn’t any change....?]

The Dungeon stopped shaking. The ever-expanding hallway stopped expanding, and no new Skeletons appeared..

The Dungeon walls, which had disappeared, started to slowly grow back. The out of control Mana within the Dungeon calmed a little bit.

“Artpe... Nothing has changed?”

“Yes, Maetel. You made the correct observation.”

Artpe waved his hand at his surrounding. The protective shield, which had been revolving around him, shot out towards a group of Skeletons.

Until a moment ago, new Skeletons had appeared every time when a group went down. It was an attempt to tire out the two heroes. However, one could no longer see the reinforcements.

“Ah. This is....!”

[Can it be....]

[Our connection to our comrades on the other side was severed. Our magic was reduced by the Dungeon’s power! This means he manipulated the magic spell.... My god. How could such a young

child do this!]

Maetel quickly realized what had occurred. The Skeletons were a step late in realizing it, and they started to talk noisily amongst themselves.

Artpe had expanded his magical senses, and he had encased the current hallway and the several hundred Skeletons within it. He spoke in a confident manner.

“Nothing will change from now on. Your reinforcements won’t be coming.”

It was as if the reinforcement were gone. It wasn’t an easy task to erase one’s enemies from the face of this world using pure Mana.

Yes, they were still alive. Even now they were probably stamping their feet as they waited for their turn to come.

However, they would be waiting on the Dungeon’s next floor, which won’t open until all the Skeletons here were killed.

Chapter 13 – The Link Between You and I (1)

At first, Artpe couldn't fathom how the Dungeon and Skeletons were connected through the Record Link.

However, it was simple once he understood it. From the beginning, the Record Link was over the entire Dungeon... To be more precise, when the requirement for destroying the Elite Skeleton Warrior was met, a field was placed over the Dungeon. Everything within the Dungeon was placed within its sphere of influence.

Usually, it was impossible to synchronize all the monsters, yet this method had allowed the impossible to become possible. This field also allowed the Dungeon's monsters to change the structure of the Dungeon using their will. They merged the separated space, and it allowed them to send forth countless number of monsters.

Artpe had realized this fact before it was too late. Of course, even if he realized it, there wasn't much he could do at this point in time.

It was normal to have no options in such a situation.

“However, I'm an abnormality.”

Even if Artpe couldn't cancel the Record Link in its entirety, he could push and distort the enormous magic spell using his Mana. It was possible to cause a minute amount of change.

This was why he was using his Mana Control ability to its limit as he spliced small parts of the Record Link using his Mana. Then he rejoined the split ends in different configurations to set small restriction.

He tied off the part of the region considered to be the 6th floor of the Dungeons. Afterwards, he tied off the 7th floor, then he moved on to tie the next region below.....

This was why there was no change occurring to the Dungeon

now. Of course, all the monsters on the same floor were still connected through the Record Link. However, at the very least, the outer appearance of the Dungeon had returned to looking like any other normal Dungeon.

“The fact that it’ll be difficult to smash through this Dungeon hasn’t changed, but we no longer have to fear about our stamina running out by fighting against an unknown number of reinforcements. Moreover, the Record Link to the other Skeletons on the other floors was completely severed....”

“If it is as you’ve said, does this perhaps mean....”

“You are pretty quick on the uptake.”

Artpe met Maetel’s sparkling eyes, and he smirked.

“After we disable their ability to move, we can kill all of the Skeletons on this floor.”

The Skeletons here had been isolated from the others. The ridiculous concept that they couldn’t gain any EXP until they cleared the entire Dungeon was gone now. They would no longer have to suffer under such crazy and tortuous stricture.

They were still under the difficult restriction where they had to disable all the monsters on a single floor without killing the monsters. However, it didn’t feel onerous to the two heroes.

They’ll win. They will survive to become stronger. It didn’t matter who tried to test them.

He didn’t care about the reasons behind such tests. He would take them all. If he was at a test site, he would upend it. If he was in a prison, he would destroy it. If it was a kingdom, he would raze it to the ground.

“We aren’t obligated to play on a stage made by the enemy. Remember that, Maetel. The enemies should dance to our music. We are the ones that have to survive after defeating our enemies. It doesn’t matter if they call us cheap. They can even cuss us out for

being the bad guys.”

This was the philosophy of survival developed by the Four Heavenly King Artpe Hirtana Kelduke of the Demon King’s army. In his previous life, he had merely been an extra that should have been killed off early in the story. However, he had been able to stay alive until the hero invaded the Demon King’s castle. This was the reason why.

In the end, he was dispatched by the radiant hero, but she was by his side now. Nothing would be impossible for the two of them. Even if it was impossible, they would make it possible.

“The fact that we survive is us winning. That is why we have to survive to win. The most important thing is our own survival. There is nothing worth more than that.”

“....Yes..”

Maetel firmly nodded her head. Of course, she was was born with a strong sense of justice. She was too innocent to understand the selfishness and spite he had developed by surviving through the long years.

Still, this would be enough. She wouldn’t be easily swindled by others now. He had created a foundation he could build on.

[W...what the hell is this.]

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

The Skeletons were having a hard time accepting the fact that an outsider had changed the entire layout of the Dungeon. How long had they been waiting for this moment! How patient had they been! They had been eagerly waiting for this as they hated every moment of the wait!

They had even allowed themselves to become lowly Undead to protect this place. They had placed their worth in protecting the place. This was their shining moment, yet these little brats were treating them like trash! The little brats had spit on them! It was a

twisted situation where they were being looked down on!

[This is wrong! They won't be able to prove their worth this way! They will only just get stronger!]

[You are making a mistake! You don't possess the necessary qualification!]

"You guys should all shut up. If this qualification involves us being accepted by such rotten Skeletons, I would rather not have it! I care not for it! Maetel!"

"None of you will be able to run away!"

His Magic was running smoothly, so he just had to focus on Maetel and his shield. Artpe was able to bolster Maetel's power as he freely controlled his shield. He attacked the flustered group of Skeletons.

[How can this.... Koohk!]

[These bastards don't have the right to take the test. We'll kill you! We'll destroy you!]

The Skeletons had been shaken when an abnormality occurred in their Record Link, so they weren't able to properly react to the situation. However, they had now accepted the truth that they would have to defeat Artpe and Maetel with the troops on this floor. They strengthened the Record Link between each other, and they started actively attacking the two heroes.

Of course, Maetel was getting stronger even at this moment as she participated in the battle. This was why the Skeletons weren't in a favorable position.

It wasn't as if the Skeletons had gone easy on them from the beginning, because it was a test. Nothing would change from their adjusted attitude!

[Are you planning on imitating a boomerang with your shoddy shield? It is too heavy! It looks like a pig rolling across the ground!]

“What the hell are you looking at! That is only an after-image!”

[Koo-ahhhhhhk!]

He hadn't wanted to grow in this direction, but Artpe's ability to throw the shield... No, the ability to control it was growing in real time. He was providing Maetel with Mana. Was he receiving some of her stamina and reflexes in return?

Several dozen Mana Threads were extended from his one hand, and they were used to control the shield. The sharp edge of the shield, which could inflict the curse, was raised. It flew freely across the large hallway as it impacted the Skeletons' bodies in order. The damage it inflicted wasn't light.

“Here and here!”

[The bastard's shield is weakening us.]

[We have to catch and kill him. We have to kill....]

As time passed, Artpe's shield flew faster, and it rotated more sharply. He was inflicting damage on par with Maetel's bastard sword. The Skeletons had been afraid of Maetel, so they had been herded towards him. However, he was taking them down faster as time passed, and he finally realized something.

‘What is this? What the hell is happening? I'm satisfied with just being able to push and keep others in check. What is the deal with this? How is it possible for me to dominate foes that are 20 levels higher than me? If I make a mistake, I might kill them outright.... Moreover, I think the curse effect has gotten stronger.’

Artpe reflected on why this was so. He realized that the act of infusing Mana into the shield was slowly strengthening the shield's special characteristic.

This was on another level compared to simply infusing a rock in an attempt to make it explode. He had used his Mana to increase the performance of the Artifact at a fundamental level. Basically, he had used [Reinforcement].

In other words, it was a special rare Support type skill. He didn't have to say it out loud, but this was a hellishly difficult skill to learn.

‘...when and how did I learn this skill?’

What did he actually do to precipitate this? He had caused change on the Record Link casted on the entire Dungeon. He knew he had done a pretty good job, but this act and the reinforcing of the shield was part of an entirely different discipline.

The only thing else he had done was establishing the Mana link with Maetel. He had poured Mana into her, and he had busily thrown his shield around.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

[The shield... The shield is getting larger! It is starting to rotate!]

[Dodge it. The bastard isn't trying to kill us! He is just trying to inflict pain! The bastard is not a hero! He is the devil! His wickedness is almost on par with the Four Heavenly Kings under the Demon King!]

It was as if they knew about his past occupation as one of the Four Heavenly Kings. The Skeletons kept spouting impudent words, so he thought about mowing them down with his shield.

‘I'm awakening to skills at a ridiculous level. This should only be possible for Maetel.... Wait a moment. When I used the link on Maetel, maybe Mana wasn't the only thing that was shared between us?’

His body was moving more swiftly, and he had easily acquired a skill he hadn't possessed before. Maybe this spell didn't simply link their Mana. He might have created something more grand.

At this point, he wanted to check his ability using his Read All Creation skill, and he was annoyed that he didn't have the spare time to do so.

‘Still, if my theory is correct, Maetel’s aptitude is being shared with me.’

It was a very dangerous occurrence for him. Maetel was supposed to become the most brilliant hero in history using her talent. This talent was being shared with Artpe, who was of mediocre talents. This would throw a big wrench in his plan.

This would slow down Maetel’s growth, and there was a chance that Artpe might pass her. Then the enemy’s gaze might focus more on him. Something terrible such as that might occur to him!

If possible, he had planned on maintaining the Mana link indefinitely. However, this changed the story. After the battle ended, he would get a clear assessment of himself using his Read All Creation ability. Then he planned on severing the Mana link as soon as possible.

The brightest star had to be Maetel. Artpe didn’t want to shine brighter than her.

‘Basically, the act of emitting light is like a work out. I’m too lazy to work out.. After I receive enough light from Maetel, I’ll just reflect the light. That will be sufficient.’

This was a mindset unbefitting of a hero. However, his previous occupation was being one of the Four Heavenly Kings, and he had always dreamed about living the life as a dairy farmer! He was able to come up with such possibilities, because he was Artpe!

Maetel didn’t even realize what was going through his thoughts. She diligently moved her body. Even now she was efficiently pulling Artpe’s bountiful Mana towards her for her use. She was getting stronger even at this moment!

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhp!”

[Strong. They are too strong!]

[We need more reinforcement.... Aht! We don’t have any!]

[Maetel]

[Level : 32]

[Swordsmanship Lv8]

[Berserk Lv4]

[Mana Control Lv6]

“From the looks of it, it doesn’t look like her talent had decreased at all.....”

Artpe mumbled bitterly as he waved his hand. The last reinforcement added before the 6th floor was isolated stepped forward. The highest level among the group was 55. They hesitatingly moved towards the two.

[You, who explore the domain of the impossible, shall face either creation or destruction at the end of this chaos. We will test your small body...kuhk!]

“Stop giving a monologue, and fight me!”

[How dareeeeeeeeee you... Kah-ahk!]

The two heroes had a lot to think about, yet the Skeleton with an empty skull was spouting philosophical words! It was merely an extra, yet it was trying to act cool. Even if the creator forgave such actions, Artpe wouldn’t forgive them!

“All of you fuck off! If you know what is good for you, you should separate your head from your body! Just roll around on the floor!”

[How dare you sully our noble resolve... Kahk!]

One Skeleton in particular was filled with rage. It had tried to speak, yet the edge of Artpe’s shield impacted on its body. The Skeleton was thrown to the Dungeon’s wall.

Even after impacting on the Skeleton, the shield didn’t lose any momentum. It attacked three additional Skeletons. Then it violently revolved around Artpe to fend off the Skeletons trying to

swing their swords towards him. The shield was even able to break their weapons.

“All right. This should be enough.”

He would be able to prevail over this situation without asking a favor of Maetel. The Skeletons that had been crowding around him were mostly defeated. He nodded in satisfaction when he checked that less than 100 Skeletons were left.

[I will not open the way for such wicked beings!]

[We have to defeat them. I'll make them into Skeletons! They will be the same as us!]

“You can try.”

“I'll do it! I'll defeat them all!”

He still had over half his Mana. He assessed the amount of Mana he had left against the number of Skeletons....

They could do this. He was sure of it.

They were the victors. .

Chapter 14 – The Link Between You and I (2)

A modicum amount of time had passed from that moment. It was a short amount of time where not even one hour had passed. It was also the moment in their lives where Artpe and Maetel had to focus the most.

Artpe was in a precarious situation where his Mana was about to bottom out, so he continued to keep a low profile. In the end, Maetel's Swordsmanship had reached level 9.....

The Skeletons, who were exhausted from battle, tried a new tactic where they purposefully tried to die through Maetel's attacks. However, Artpe intercepted them by throwing his shield into their abdomen. They were put out of the battle by the hard hits, and the only thing these Skeletons could do was roll around the floor.

Finally, Artpe felt himself reach his limit in terms of his body and Mana.

“Hoo-ooh. Koo-hoo-ooh....!”

“It is all done, Artpe!”

“Ggoo-oohk. All right.!”

Artpe was moments away from losing his consciousness. He was about to fall to the floor. However, a voice of an angel could be heard through Artpe's ears. Artpe gritted his teeth as he fought to stay up. He checked the state of the Dungeon.

It was as if hell had manifested on this floor.

[Goo-gahk, gah-gah-gahk.....]

[There is no way.... I'll accept.....]

[Death... I only want an honorable death.....]

The number of Skeletons, who had died, was zero. The number of Skeletons capable of continuing the battle was also zero. The

floor was a mess. It was hard to tell if the bones were ribs or spines. They were all just rolling around the floor.

The two heroes had taken down over 400 Skeletons, and it drove home the absurdity of the situation faced by the party of two.

“Are you ok, Artpe....?”

“I’m still alive but, you.... Are you able to cancel your Berserk state?”

“.....yes!”

It was as she said. Her emotions started to calm after speaking those words. The red haze that had covered her entire body dissipated, and her Mana calmed. Artpe let out a bitter laugh at the sight.

Rage had swept over her, and her rage had paralyzed a portion of her rationality. He had been a little bit worried that she wouldn’t have been able to cancel her Berserk state. It might have led to an accident occurring....

It seemed his fears had been baseless.

Still, a wrong was a wrong even if the two of them survived the battle unharmed. First, he ended the Mana link with her. He narrowed his eyes as he spoke in a stern voice.

“Were you aware that you had learned a dangerous skill?”

“Yes. However, if I hadn’t maintained it, I thought Artpe would die....”

“Still, if you had died, all of this would have been for naught. If I survived while you died in this place, do you think I would have been happy?”

“Ah-oooh.”

When she heard Artpe’s cold voice, Maetel’s cheeks turned red, and she lowered her head. When he saw this sight, he finally took his ire down a peg.

It was easy to forget, but she was a beginner hero. She had picked up the sword less than a week ago. She was only a 12 year old girl. Yet she had somehow kept a hold on her rationality as she maintained her Berserk skill. In truth, she deserved praise.

“The danger of using that skill is so high, because it is a skill that deals with an emotion. If you think of the skill as your absolute ally, it’ll come back as a blade that will plunge itself into your heart. I just want you to remember this fact. All right?”

“Y...yes. I’ll keep that in mind.”

“....all right. Let’s finish this.”

In truth, he wanted to sit her down and give her a lecture. However, he worried his words would create an artificial ceiling for her talent, so he decided to leave it be.

“Hoohp.”

He violently pulled on the threads connected to the shield. The enormous shield fell from the air to destroy the skulls of the nearest Skeletons. All the Skeletons on the floor had already been inflicted with several layers of the shield’s curse, so they couldn’t put up any fight against the shield. They were broken into pieces.

[D...dead.]

[Our comrades were completely annihilated.....]

[Our power is getting stronger, but....]

“May I destroy all of them, Artpe?”

“Yes, you can destroy all of them.”

Artpe let out a kind laugh as he raised his hand again. The shield floated into the air as it followed his hand gesture. It stood on its edge, and it started to rotate in a violent manner. Maetel also squeezed out the remaining energy left in her tired body as she swung her bastard sword.

[Koo-ahk!]

[Koo-gah-gahk!]

[Regret.....]

Every time one Skeleton was killed the other Skeletons felt a surge of energy within their bodies. However, the only thing they could do with the abundance of energy was to rattle around the floor. Of course, as more Skeletons died, the defense of the remaining Skeletons also increased. The Skeletons couldn't even jump towards the two heroes to attack them, so the improvements being wrought on the Skeletons were meaningless.

“A single blow isn't enough to kill them. Eh-eet! Eh-eet!”

“There is a better way to do this, Maetel. You shouldn't unnecessarily harm you weapon's durability.”

Artpe extended his Mana Threads, and he took control of the Skeletons, who couldn't put up much of a fight. He started bashing the skulls of Skeletons against each other.

He was able to smash and eliminate the Skeletons in an effective manner!

[Koo-ahhhhh!]

[You... You wicked bastards.....!]

He used the hardened skulls against each other! Although his past occupation was being one of the Four Heavenly Kings, he was displaying a level of ruthlessness that might exceed the Demon King!

“Artpe is amazing! This really is easier than breaking them with my sword!”

“Yes, it really is....”

The current hero was already different person now. In her previous incarnation, Maetel had been a pure and innocent woman. He had seen her shed tears when one of the Four Heavenly King had died. She had been a virtuous woman. Now she was a

girl, who was smashing Skeletons against each other!

Artpe realized how important early education was as he swung the skull. If someone saw the two, they wouldn't think they were heroes. They looked like great candidates to become the next Demon King.

Finally, the moment of truth arrived.

"These are the last ones, Artpe."

"Look at how hard their skulls are. It is hard to call them as being Skeletons anymore. They are almost on the same rank as a Dullahan."

[We want you to give us an honorable death....!]

The power of several hundred Skeletons were split between the two remaining Skeletons. The two skulls were the product of this process. They were so heavy and hard that one wondered if they could be used as weapons. Artpe was weak in strength, so he couldn't even lift the skulls. Maetel, who easily swung the bastard sword, was barely able to lift them.

As an experiment, she threw the skulls against the wall. The blameless wall cracked instead of the skulls. Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement when he saw this.

"I think it is comparable to a level 100.....?"

"So is it better to catch 400 level 50 Skeletons or one level 100 Skeleton? Which gives better EXP?"

"Of course, the former gives an overwhelmingly more EXP. Anyways, this magic wasn't meant to give its opponents EXP in such a manner."

In terms of EXP, Artpe and Maetel was suffering a very huge loss through this venture.

If they had killed 400 normal level 50 Skeletons, they would have been strengthened by a ridiculous amount. However, if one looked

at the outcome of this battle, it had been equivalent to killing a level 10 Skeleton.

“However, the world isn’t only about EXP.”

When one defeated an enemy that was significantly higher in level, one’s Achievement was recorded. It was something that followed one throughout one’s lifetime.

If one defeated a level 70 enemy at level 50, the Achievement remained throughout one’s lifetime. It had the effect of aiding the one, who had acquired the Achievement. Even if one faced an enemy of higher level at a later date, the effects of the Achievement won’t weaken or disappear. It helped one fight the higher level enemy head-on. It even had an influence on the acquisition of skills, and the reward items that one acquired from battling monsters.

“On top of it all, you can’t ignore the skill growth that occurs when you apply the finishing blow. Normally, a skill grows the more you use it. The other method to grow your skill is to kill an enemy using the skill. If you acquired the skill while fighting an enemy, the successful killing of the enemy allows the skill to grow once more.”

“Wow. Amazing.”

Of course, there was no adjustment if one wasn’t successful in killing the enemy. This was also true for running away or canceling the battle. The reason why this happened was unknown.

Someday, he’ll ask the question to the god, who had made this world. He’ll seize the bastard by the collar.

“The technical term for this phenomena is called Ruminatio.”

“Artpe knows everything!”

“I don’t know everything. I know what I know.”

While Maetel was asking questions and receiving answers from

Artpe, she was bashing the two skulls against each other. Cracks were forming on the skulls. Her repetitive action was so mechanical that he felt goose bumps all over his body. Artpe took a small step backwards.

[I won't forgive you. I will revive someday, and I will raise my sword in revenge against you guys!]

“Yes. Next Undead, please.”

“Hoo-ooh..... This is the last one!”

Maetel let out a shout as she brought one skull against the other. At that moment, she gathered the small amount of Mana left inside her body into her arms. This single strike was more powerful than any of her previous blows. It cleanly pulverized both skulls. At the same time, it wouldn't have surprised Artpe if she gained the Bash skill through this action.

Anyways, this was how all the monsters on the 6th floor were eradicated. The Mana and the Record had been gathered into a single bundle. It was finally released from the monsters, and it was given to the challengers.

“Ah-ooh.”

Maetel let out a short moan. Artpe had somewhat expected this so he kept his mouth shut, but it wasn't as if he was fine. It felt as if all their internal organs had been dislodged. They felt nausea sweep over them as if their internal organs were spinning around like a tornado.

“Artpe.... This is....”

“Endure it.... It is the level up.”

“This is it? Koo-oo-oohk.”

[Maetel]

[Level : 34]

[Level : 35]

[Level : 36]

[Level : 37]

Artpe could see Maetel's information update in real time. His innate ability wasn't broken. Artpe was probably going through a similar situation as her right now.

The two Skeletons had been strengthened to the extreme, and their EXP was divided between two, who were in their early level 30s. Of course, their levels would increase in a flash. A level up strengthened the body and soul. They were going through about a dozen level ups, so it wasn't strange to see their bodies undergo an abrupt change.

"It hurts so much, Artpe."

"Endure it. It'll pass soon."

"Yes....!"

[Maetel]

[Level : 41]

Maetel's ability shone in this instance. Even if she received the same amount of EXP as others, she grew at a much faster pace. Artpe's pain was slowly ebbing away, but it seemed Maetel was still in distress.

When Artpe experienced his rapid level ups, he felt his Mana fill up in an instant. He took deep breaths as he monitored Maetel. Shortly, Maetel also let out a deep sigh as if she was expelling everything that had built up inside her. Then she sat down heavily.

"Level ups are really miraculous... I'm incredibly tired, yet I feel really strong.."

"Your existence seems to be most miraculous phenomena to me."

[Maetel]

[Level : 43]

[Swordsmanship Lv11]

[Mana Control Lv8]

[Berserk Lv7]

How could this information be about a girl, who picked up the sword only a week ago? Even a mercenary, who participated in battles for 10 years, would be unable to grow to this extent!

Artpe still didn't like the purpose behind this Dungeon, yet he had to grudgingly admit that it had been very helpful in radically maturing the hero. She had grown in skill by facing an amalgamation of monsters that resided on a single floor. What Achievement will she be able to gain if she faced a monster, who possessed the combined might of all the floors!

'Of course, it's a death sentence to carry out the original test.'

He still couldn't believe he was able to cause change to the Record Link. It really was a result that had risen out of his desperation. Artpe shook his head as he let out a bitter laugh.

"The wall is opening, Artpe."

"It is set-up to do so."

They had gained control of the 6th floor of the Dungeon, so the Record Link placed on this floor was cancelled. When they descended to the 7th floor, they arrived at a small fountain. It was placed there as if to encourage the weary to rest at this spot. Artpe looked at Maetel, who let out a cheer. He smiled as he nodded his head.

"Don't be fooled. It is poisoned water."

"This Dungeon is really terrible!"

"You'll be fine if you keep that attitude. There is nothing here you should trust in this damned place."

Before Artpe could finish his words, a faint light started to emanate near the fountain. Artpe's eyes twinkled when he

discovered it.

“I’m sorry. Let me modify that statement. There is one person you can trust here.”

“Huh?”

The light disappeared, and in its place, a beautiful woman with a big cart appeared. Maetel tilted her head in confusion when she saw this stranger suddenly appear in front of them. Artpe grinned. He turned to look at Maetel as he spoke.

“I’m talking about the Dungeon Merchant.”

Chapter 15 – The Link Between You and I (3)

“Hello, adventurers. I was dispatched by the Anywhere company. I am here to help your Dungeon exploration be as smooth and pleasant of an experience as it can be. I am a middleman. My name is Mycenae!”

She had smooth brown skin, and a notably ample bosom. The beautiful woman’s voice was clear as if a bell was ringing. She waved her hand as she spoke towards Artpe and Maetel.

Maetel instinctively pushed Artpe behind her, and she was about to raise her sword. Artpe smirked as he placed his hand on her shoulder.

“She isn’t an enemy, so don’t worry about it. According to their contract, they aren’t allowed to attack us first.”

“Contract?”

“It is a contract made with the god. It is sometimes called the Dungeon contract. Anyways, it is a contract that no one can break, so you don’t have to worry about it.”

“Artpe even knows about that. You are really amazing.”

“Oh my. Do you know about the Anywhere company?”

She surmised they were out of the ordinary, since the two kids were able to reach the depths of this Dungeon. However, she never expected him to have some general knowledge about her store!

Mycenae, who was the middleman from the Anywhere company, looked at Artpe with round eyes. Artpe snorted as he waved his hand.

“How dare you?”

Several dozen Mana threads were emitted from both sides, and they crossed paths. There weren’t any ill-intention behind her use of Mana, but it was indiscriminately broken up as it dissipated. He

was able to declare this his words with impudence. All detection and inquiry magic was useless under his Read All Creation ability!

“Oh my!”

“Don’t you try to get cute with me, merchant.”

“Yes.....”

Mycenae realized that her inquiry magic had been denied before it could even activate. She backed away in fright. She backed into the cart, and her bosom jiggled as if it was about to spill out.

Every man, who had the strength to raise a spoon, would have been instinctively drawn to her charming gesture. However, Artpe just spit on the ground.

“Hoong. You are an ajumma.”

“W...what did you just say!?”

“You should be prepared to give us a 20% discount, ajumma. If you were able pull it off in secret, it would be fine. However, you have no excuse, since I found out. Right?”

“Kook.....!”

She had been a middleman for the Anywhere company for the past 100 years. She was a veteran of this industry. She never expected to be humiliated in her first meeting with this brat! Mycenae balled up her fist as they trembled.

Artpe turned his gaze away from her.

His gaze reached the two Skeletons, who had been enhanced to the extreme. Only pile of bone dusts was left behind as remains.

“All right. Let’s do our looting first.”

“Yes!”

“Huh, customer?”

“We’ll trade with you. Just wait there.”

Even if she set aside the brusque little man, the girl had completely ignored her. She felt a large crack form in her pride.

Who the hell were they! Unlike their appearances, why were they giving off a vibe of 20 year veteran Dungeon explorers!

“There really is only powders left behind. Still, it isn’t as if there are no other way to....”

“I tried to loot, but it didn’t work. What should I do in such a situation, Artpe?”

“All right. I’ll teach it to you, so you should pay close attention.”

Even as Mycenae’s body shook, Artpe approached the two pile of bone dusts, and he extended his Mana Threads in abundance. Maetel stood by his side, and her head was tilted in confusion. He gave a friendly explanation.

“Of course, it does seem impossible to loot a monster that had been completely pulverized, but this isn’t the case if you have the ability to control Mana. Watch me.”

Mana Threads extended out of his hand, and they reached the two piles of bone dusts made out of two Skeletons. The piles reacted to the Mana Threads, and it started to clump into a single pile. Artpe moved his hand in various directions, and the process accelerated.

“Next, you have to do this....”

“Wow.”

When he severed the Mana Threads, the debris also stopped moving. It looked like a pile of ash. It was as if a vampire had been burned to death there.

“We just have to wait for the chosen items to come out. This is an easy method you can use if you acted rashly by burning remains of a monster. You should keep that in mind.”

“As expected, Artpe is amazing!”

“These customers are.....”

This Dungeon had been appealing enough to call her forth. The fact that these young adventurers were able to last inside this place was surprising, but it was much more surprising to see one of them use such advanced technique to loot the monsters.

While Mycenae was gawking at them, the looting process was coming to a end. It looked to be successful.

“Ah, Artpe. Something is emerging.”

“It is an arm warmer. Since you have the gauntlets, this one is mine.”

“Wow. A pretty crystal also came out!”

“There were too much excess magical energy from monsters gathered here. Since it couldn’t be collected naturally, it clumped together. Normally, it is used as ingredient for making magical tools. Mmmm. This isn’t an item that you can use.....”

“Artpe can have it all. I have the sword and the armor.”

Mmm. She was like an unwavering angel. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he put the crystal away. Then he put on the arm warmers.

It was unknown as to why arm warmers made out of black leather was dropped by a Skeleton, but when he equipped it, it had a supplemental effect of increasing his hand speed. It wasn’t intentional, but this was the ideal equipment for Artpe, who had to use both his hands for battle.

“I can see something still shining there, Artpe.”

“Ah. I almost forgot about it.”

Since all the drops of Skeletons on this floor was gathered in one place, there would also be some money mixed inside the loot. He saw two pretty large gold coins. Artpe smirked as he picked them up.

“I anticipated a gold coin would come out, but I didn’t expect

two. Nice.”

“Wahhhhh. They are pretty.”

This was the first time Maetel had seen gold coins in her lifetime. Her eyes twinkled as she let out an exclamation. A gold coin was worth 100 times more than a silver coin. This wasn't something unique to Maetel. Even their town's chief would never be able to possess one in his lifetime.

“Normally, not all monsters over level 100 drop gold coins. This miraculous event occurred, because all our enemies were tied together by the Record Link. You should keep that in mind.”

“All right!”

“Wait a moment, customer. Record Link? What is that?”

Even if she was a veteran middleman for the Dungeons, this didn't mean she knew everything about ancient magic. Of course, Artpe didn't answer the merchant's question. He finished his looting.

“We didn't gain any rewards that we can liquidate.... Still, if we add the gold coins to the money we already have, I might be able manage a decent trade.”

“What is it?”

“Wait a moment.”

After Artpe made sure there weren't anything else he could take, he walked towards the Dungeon merchant he had been ignoring up until now. He moved towards Mycenae. Mycenae acted as if she had forgotten about the affront of being ignored up until now. She greeted him with a bright smile.

“Welcome, customer. Are you looking for a specific item?”

“One empty bottle”

“Y...you want an empty bottle?”

“Yes.”

Mycenae and Artpe made eye contact. She tried her best to discern Artpe’s inner thoughts, but he kept a sickeningly innocent expression on his face.

She knew he was up to something. However, a member of the Anywhere company couldn’t turn down a trade unless there was a special circumstance involved! It was the biggest taboo to turn down a trade! Mycenae felt uneasy as she took out an empty bottle from her cart.

“The price is 50 bronze coins.”

“It is only a single empty bottle! Why is it so expensive!?”

“All Dungeon merchants are like this.”

Artpe ignored Maetel, who was shocked. He took the empty bottle. Mycenae watched Artpe unstopper the bottle. She spoke with a worried tone in her voice.

“It seems you are trying to fill up the bottle with the water from the fountain. Shouldn’t you check if the water is safe to drink first? It is a fundamental rule followed by all adventurers.”

“I know. I already checked it.”

“You already checked it!?”

“It originates in my heart to manifest in the shallow floor of the water. Peel off your despicable outer layer to reveal what lies inside!”

“W...what the hell!?”

While the middleman Mycenae expressed her dismay, Artpe finished his chant. It caused an enormous amount of friction to form at the middle of the fountain!

“Wa-ha-ha-ha. The water is boiling!”

“That’s right. I’m wastefully using my Mana!”

The Hyper Rubbing spell was causing so much friction that it was vaporizing the cold water. He was now over level 40, and he was getting used to forming the Hyper Rubbing spell. The effectiveness of the magic was on a different level compared to before.

“Kyahhhhk, customer. If the water holds poison, it’ll turn into a poisonous fog!”

“I already checked it!”

The steam covered them completely, but there was no poison within it. There were some poison that dissolved entirely in water, and it could have been vaporized alongside the water. On the other hand, there were poisons that didn’t mix with the water. It would be left behind in place as sediment.

Of course, the poison within the fountain was the latter type. This was why Artpe didn’t hesitate to evaporate the water.

“It is the first time I’ve heard of such a spell. If you wanted to boil the water, couldn’t you have just used a fire type magic?”

“I did it, because I don’t have such magic!”

“I’m currently selling the Boil spell for two gold. The fire spell is being sold at a great price of 1 gold!”

“I won’t buy it!”

There were a lot of water inside the fountain, so it took a good amount of time for all of it to evaporate. After a long wait, the result came to fruition. The copious amount of water inside the water fountain had all evaporated, and on the floor, a dark green powder was left behind in a lump.

“Ah.”

“Hmmp.”

Artpe smirked when he saw Mycenae unconsciously let out a moan. He put the powder into the empty bottle. Of course, the identity of the powder was a form of poison. It was fine to touch it

with one's bare hands. Its toxicity appeared only when it was mixed with a liquid, so it was safe to touch it right now.

“Ah.....”

“Well, are you going to buy this?”

Artpe didn't leave a single grain of the green powder behind. He stoppered the bottle, and he pushed it towards Mycenae. Her cheeks were puffed up as she started to argue with Artpe.

“.....so you already know why the Dungeon Merchants appear in Dungeons?”

“Of course. You guys have designs on acquiring magical goods.”

When adventurers explore a Dungeon, they face danger and opportunity prepared by the Dungeon. One might find a hidden treasure box, a poisoned fountain or a pond made out of the highest quality holy water.

It was possible for the Dungeon Merchants to detect the energies of these treasures, and they appeared randomly in these Dungeons.

If an adventurer was unable to find the treasures, the Dungeon Merchants acquired the rights to take the unfound treasures. Around half the population considered to be adventurers were poor at detecting treasures on each floor.

Even if an adventurer knew why a Dungeon Merchant had appeared, the adventurer wouldn't be able to find the treasure unless they were very skilled. An adventurer could search the entirety of the Dungeon for treasures just based on the fact that a Dungeon Merchant had appeared, but the chance of finding the treasure was close to zero.

Of course, Artpe was an anomaly. Even before the Dungeon Merchant had appeared, he knew what was waiting for him at the end of the 6th floor. He had located everything, so there was nothing else to say. He grinned as he shook the bottle containing the green powder.

“So you aren’t going to buy it?”

Mycenae’s expression crumpled in distress, but her instinct as a merchant was soon brought to the fore.

“Koo-oohk.... I’ll buy it for 2 gold.”

“All right. I hope you meet a pushover next time, who will be easily deceived by you.”

Artpe turned around without hesitation, and Mycenae desperately reached out towards him.

“I’ll give you 4 gold! You have to factor in the processing cost! The processing cost!”

“I made sure there wasn’t a single drop of water remained. What processing fee? Give me 10 gold.”

“You are being heavy-handed....!”

“If you don’t buy it for 10 gold, there will be no trade.”

Artpe was firm. He was so resolute that it made one wonder if the creator, who made the boundaries between ocean and land, spoke in such a way in the past.

Mycenae knew that the person in front of her already knew the exact worth of the item within her hand. If so, what choice did she have? She had no choice, but to agree to his demand!

“I’ll buy it for 10 gold.”

“All right. Since you bought the Basilisk Venom Powder for the price of 10 gold, this isn’t a losing proposition for you.”

“You even knew the name.....”

At that moment, Mycenae decided to treat him like an experienced merchant. When one met a person like him, the fact that she didn’t take a loss was a form of victory!

Moreover, she would be able to gather information on a little-known adventurer on this continent. She would be able to gain

massive profit from it.

“Next... I want you to repair our equipments.”

“Repair... All right. Huh? All your equipment are artifacts, but.... Overall, you guys have pretty bad equipment. Does this mean that your levels are also.....?”

“I told you not to pry any further.”

It cost 50 silvers to repair all the equipment. He paid 40 silvers after receiving the 20% discount.

Mycenae never expected him to discount the price of the repair fee, but she also knew she had acted rude in the first place. This was why she couldn't do anything about it.

“Next, I want boots and helmet for her. I want a robe. I want you to give me your best performing equipment with the lowest level restriction.”

“I have boots and helmet made from the bones of a Blood Ketai. The two items will be worth 8 gold.....”

“Since I'm receiving a 20% discount, I'll give you 6 gold and 30 silver. ”

“Jeez. You should just give up on being an adventurer to become a merchant.”

Maetel's lower extremities and head had been vulnerable compared to the other regions of her body. She now had defensive gears that could protect those regions. Artpe purchased a robe made out of a black fabric. The threads were knitted using the quills of the Darkness Hedgehog, which had the ability to manipulate magical energy. The robe increased one's Mana by a small amount, and it had a modest ability to obstruct other's perception. This was why he had to pay 6 golds for it.

In truth, these equipment weren't something that could be obtained by level 40s. The power of money was really great.

“There, Maetel. You should be pretty safe wearing these.”

“Ah. Ah-ooh. It is so expensive. These expensive items are for me.....”

The fact that Artpe had obtained 10 gold by selling a weird powder was already shocking in itself. Now that she saw so much gold being exchanged for their equipment, she became delirious.

“The cows we can buy with that much money.... One, two three.... Ooh-ahhhhh.”

“Calm down, Maetel. Also, I want to purchase water and food with the remaining money, ajumma. Give me the cheapest ones.”

“I’m not an ajumma! I’m a green spring girl!”

“If ajumma is a maiden, then I’m a hero.”

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhhh!”

Mycenae didn’t know that Artpe was really a hero. She was infuriated when she saw his sly smile! However, the heroes weren’t paying attention to her anymore.

“Ooh ooh. I don’t like food that doesn’t taste good.....”

“A hard bread you eat right now will come back as tenderloin steak in the future. You have to be patient.”

“.....yes, I’ll be patient! I’ll wait until happiness comes to Artpe and I!”

“No, you don’t have to wait that long.”

Mycenae took the money pouch put forth by Artpe. She emptied it, then she started preparing the dry foods and water. Mycenae was dumbfounded as she heard Artpe placate Maetel.

“You guys act as if you’ve been clearing Dungeons for 20 years. You guys must have received fantastic training at home.”

“None of your business.”

He spoke in a brusque manner as he received the bag with dry

foods and canteens containing water. After he put away the items inside his robe, he let out a sigh as he raised his head.

Mycenae somehow managed to regain her business smile. She gave him a cute smile, yet Artpe was apathetic. He shooed her off with his hand as he spoke to her.

“Well, you should go now. We’ll probably meet again soon.”

“I’ll see my customers off from here!”

“Nope. Go. Ajumma has to leave, then I’ll be able to take out the treasure chest you are standing on.”

“.....”

In the end, Mycenae sank to the floor.

She never expected him to be aware of it! She had endured all the humiliation up until now as an attempt to get him to act careless. She even sold her wares at a very cheap price, yet at that moment, her plan went up in smoke!

Chapter 16 – The Link Between You and I (4)

Mycenae tried her best to look pitiful as her eyes watered. She gave a request to Artpe. In truth, her main objective hadn't been the Basilisk Venom Powder. She was here for the treasure box.

“W...will you sell the content of this box to me?”

“I'll make the decision after seeing what's in it.”

Artpe gave a cold reply. Moreover, his gaze was cold too. He was silently pressuring her. It was as if he was trying to tell her to quickly move her heavy body to the side! Mycenae's stunning beauty was on the same level as a pebble rolling around in the streets. It held no meaning to him!

“Kook..... This is the first time I've suffered such humiliations since I started working for the Anywhere company.....”

“Wow! It's a treasure chest!”

An old pair of wood framed glasses and a pair of black leather boots appeared from within the treasure box. Mycenae's eyes once again shone with a fierce light!

“Are you going to sell it to me!?”

“I'll sell you only one of the two.”

As he spoke those words, Artpe pushed the wood framed glasses towards her. Mycenae was able to confirm a suspicion she had.

“You must possess a tremendous observation magic.”

“Didn't I tell you not to pry? Well, it is obvious at this point in time, but.... Well, since I've been pretty heavy handed up until now, I'll sell it to you at a price where I won't see much profit. I want 45 gold.”

“F....forty f.....!”

“I'll buy it. Thank you very much.”

The magnitude of money being exchanged had suddenly changed, and Maetel was taken aback. However, Mycenae willingly paid the price! Maetel's eyes were spinning.

Artpe had a grin on his face.

“As expected, Dungeons are honey pots. We just have to avoid being trapped and killed by the honey.”

“Customer. At the Anywhere company, we offer services ranging from providing support to escorting parties. If you need such services....”

“By doing so, you plan on taking half my loot as recompense? Dream on. Just give me my money.”

“Tsk.”

The wood framed glasses allowed one to probe the surroundings when the magic infused within the lenses was consumed. As the holder of the Read All Creation ability, Artpe had no need of this item. However, it was something all adventurers wanted when entering a Dungeon! Since the demand was high, the price was also high.

The most unfortunate aspect of this item was the fact that it could only be used a limited number of times. It disappeared after several uses. This was why consumable items were priced depending on their number of uses, and this was one of the reasons why this particular item was given a high price.

Mycenae had estimated the amount of Mana within the wood framed glasses, and she knew she could easily sell it for 50 to 60 golds at the minimum. She had a satisfied expression on her face as she put away the item into her cart. Her eyes were sparkling once again. Then her gaze landed on the black leather boots. They were letting out a sheen of a high grade item.

“Customer. I really want to purchase the boots.....”

“I'm not selling you this.”

Artpe answered flatly. He took off his worn-out shoes, and he put on the leather boots. Maetel clapped her hands. She said it looked good on him, but Artpe didn't care if it looked good or not. The only thing important to him was its performance.

“I never expected to find a pair of Blink Boots in this Dungeon.”

“?”

She had known it was a rare item, but she never expected it to be the Blink Boots! Mycenae grinded her teeth. Maetel didn't know much about magic, so she innocently tilted her head in confusion.

Blink was a magic that allowed one to instantly travel a short distance. Magicians used this magic to get out of danger. Since it was a magic spell, it had the downside of needing a long cast time.

However, it was a completely different story if the magic spell was contained within an artifact. It only needed an infusion of Mana or a fulfillment of a specific condition to activate. This was why the effectiveness of this magic increased in a single stroke!

“This is why boots containing Blink Magic are worth 100 gold at the very least! It doesn't matter if the Mana efficiency of the item is low!”

“Amazing, Artpe!”

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhh!”

On top of it all, this pair of boots had an option of activating on its own during a moment of crisis. It could be used once a day without it consuming Mana . It was also possible to use it again by adding in more Mana. Amongst the boots with the Blink option, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that these ones were ranked in the highest class.

As a cherry on top, it had a low level requirement, so Artpe could equip it. For Artpe, good things came in threes. If he was to estimate the price of this pair of boots.... It would be too annoying to come up with an estimate.

“Artpe will be safe now. I’m so happy.”

“What is up with this customer....?”

“What do you think? She’s so innocent that she would never be able to become a merchant even after she grows up. So....”

Artpe returned the entirety of the 45 golds he received from Mycenae.

“I want one Mana potion and I want the rest to be Stamina potions.”

“Artpe! Are you using all of the money right now!? We could have lived off of that money! It would have lasted for our entire lifetime!”

“You have the ability to earn money whenever you want. Moreover... It is a good idea to buy items that might spare our lives”

Artpe spoke in a calm manner. Mycenae, who was facing him, smirked.

“In many ways, I have misjudged you. Please forgive my rudeness. I can give you 1 mid-grade Mana potion, and 8 Stamina potions. Will that be ok?”

“I’ll be thankful if you added an additional Stamina potion on top of that.”

“I’ll give you an additional Mana potion too.”

“Mmm?”

Artpe’s eyebrows furrowed.

“Aren’t you being a bit too generous?”

“She is being generous!?”

“I believe you will become famous in the future. I’m just trying to gain a little bit of favor in your eyes. Please look kindly on the Anywhere company in the future. Thank you in advance.”

“Tsk…….”

Mycenae laughed with unreadable eyes. She finally regained her composure as a middleman. Artpe didn't like being in debt, but he was in a tight spot. He couldn't punt her good intentions just because he wanted to.

In the end, Artpe accepted the potions without hesitation. He took two Mana potion and one Stamina potion for himself. After he put them away inside his robe, he put the rest in a pouch before giving it to Maetel.

“You should drink it when you are extremely tired, or you can spray it on your wounds.”

“Ah-oooooh. These are too expensive for me to use.”

“The most expensive thing in this world is your life. Will you be able to use it if I frame it that way?”

“Y...yes.....”

When Maetel heard Artpe's manly words, her cheeks turned slightly red as she meekly accepted the pouch with the potions. Mycenae was still watching them as she smirked. She bowed her head as a farewell.

“I am Anywhere company's Mycenae. I'll wait for the day when we'll meet again.”

“Be my guest.”

“Goodbye for now.”

Mycenae disappeared alongside the same light that had appeared in the beginning. Maetel wondered if this was all a dream, so she pinched her own cheeks. When she realized she still had on a completely different set of items, she knew this was real. She shook her head.

“There are too many things I still don't know.”

“That is to be expected. As recompense, your talent for battle is

outstanding.”

“But I want to have conversations with Artpe about a lot of different subjects....”

“You want to talk more than this?”

Matel was already not listening to Artpe’s words. Instead, she was making a firm resolve as she clenched her fists.

“I’m going to do my best to read a lot of books from now on. I’ll become smart, so I can be of help to Artpe. I want to have many more conversations with Artpe....”

“Uh. Mmmm. All right. You do your best.”

He didn’t think it was a problem that could be solved by reading more books. Still, Artpe decided to cheer her on.

“Still, you should delay your plans on reading books. We’ll be entering the 7th floor of the Dungeon soon. The Skeletons will probably be stronger. If we don’t prepare our heart for what is to come, we’ll suffer defeat.”

“I can win against anyone. I’ll protect Artpe.”

“I like the fact that you are brave.”

He smirked as he stroked Maetel’s head. Then he plopped down on the floor. She tilted her head in confusion as she looked down at him. He announced his words in a solemn manner.

“We have to sleep first before we proceed.”

“Yes!”

They roughly rolled up a straw mat. They used it as a pillow as they laid down.

Even if a Record Link was placed over this location, a Dungeon was a Dungeon. After a certain amount of time, new monsters would appear once again on the 6th floor. Of course, these monsters would be under the influence of the Record Link since

the spell was still over the entire Dungeon. If the act of killing it once could break the Record Link, Artpe wouldn't have had so much trouble manipulating it in the first place.

Still, he was pretty sure the new monsters wouldn't show up on the 6th floor while they slept through the night. As a precaution, he pushed his hand forward to place Mana Threads in various locations around them. Maetel waited for his work to be done, then she pulled herself slightly closer to Artpe. She lay next to him. Artpe frowned.

"You are too close."

"I like this better, since it is warmer."

"What happened to your shyness?"

"I buried it in my house's backyard before I came here."

"Your house doesn't have a backyard."

Maetel didn't say any more words. She just snuggled closer to him. Since he couldn't just push her away, he let her be.

"Heh heh."

"You have a long way to go. A long way....."

"Artpe~"

Maetel acted in a coquettish manner. It was hard to imagine that this girl had annihilated the Skeletons using the bastard sword. Her voice was that sweet. Artpe had made a resolve not to fall for her tricks, yet he found himself stroking her head.

She had been in battle all day, and she hadn't had the chance to wash herself. He couldn't understand how she smelled so good. Artpe wondered if it was because she was still young. Artpe mused about such nonsensical thoughts as he closed his eyes.

The Dungeon's 7th floor turned out to be more difficult rather than being easier than the 6th floor. The monsters of the Dungeon had realized that Artpe had messed up the Dungeon's test, and its

rules. They no longer acted as if they were testing the two of them. The monsters were filled with the desire to punish them for sullyng the holy testing ground. This was why the monsters were more vicious in their attacks.

On top of that, the monsters on this floor was higher in level than the ones on the 6th floor. They had an average level of 52, and there were about 600 Skeletons in total. These monsters mainly targeted Artpe, so Artpe didn't have the chance to build up his Mana.

[Your existence is an insult to all the heroes, who existed before you!]

[I cannot forgive you!]

“You won't lay a hand on Artpe-ehhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

They had smashed the Skeletons for a whole day, yet they weren't able to clear the floor. Fortunately, their levels had increased, so they could hold out for two to four days.

If possible, Artpe didn't want Maetel to use Berserk. He didn't want to use the Mana Link either. However, these weren't foes they could beat by holding their powers back.

Maetel relied on her Berserk Skill to repel the Skeletons coming at them from all sides. Artpe had no choice, but to provide her with Mana. At the same time, he was using his shield. He was getting better at using it as time passed. He used the shield boomerang to weaken his enemies.

[Koo-hahhhhhhhhhhhk!]

“Artpe! These gloves and boots are really good! The Skeletons are easy to break using these items!”

“Yes, yes.”

[Maetel]

[Level – 43]

[Unarmed Combat Lv1]

[Strike Lv3]

[Monsters! They are cruel monsters! They are demons!]

[Give me death! I will become one with my comrades to punish you all!]

“I’ll make all your comrades like you. Then I’ll break all of you at once. Wait a little bit!”

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhh!]

How much time had passed? Maetel and Artpe were entirely reliant on the Berserk skill and the Mana Link. They were barely able to beat all of the Skeletons.

Artpe felt the burden of knowing that he was probably weakening Maetel by sharing her talent. However, unlike his worries, all of Maetel’s skills continued to evolve at a ridiculous pace. This was also true for Artpe.

Of course, it was impossible to last a couple of days using nothing. They had to use most of the potions they had purchased. Fortunately, they would once again encounter a Dungeon Merchant at the end of the 7th floor.

“Oh my. It has been only couple days, but we meet again.”

“It’s this ajumma again?”

“I’m not an ajumma!huhk. Isn’t that the Golden Lizard’s Tailbone Great Sword!?”

“97 gold.”

“Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhk!”

This was how the heroes were able to safely retool before they entered the 8th floor. Still, the Dungeon remained very difficult. Artpe wasn’t the creator of this Dungeon, so he had no idea how many floors had been separated using the Record Link.

They moved through the Dungeon's 8th floor, 9th floor, 10th floor, 11th floor, 13th floor, 15th floor.... The Dungeon continued to go on and on. The average level of the Skeletons continued to go up by a marginal amount, and at a certain point, Artpe and Maetel surpassed the level of the Skeletons.

Since they held the advantage in level, they thought they would be able to win easily from that point forward. Right when they had this thought, powerful monsters over level 100 started to appear. The monsters were called ghouls. The level difference between the party and the monsters widened in the favor of the monsters, so they were put in a difficult spot once again.

However, there weren't any mountains they couldn't overcome. Before they even engaged in a fight, Artpe was able to find all the weaknesses of his enemies. Then there was the the crazy talented Maetel, who could bring anything he ordered into reality!

This was how a period of one year had passed, and the party reached the Dungeon's 34th floor.

"How long is this Dungeon!"

"Group fights are fun, Artpe! Isn't it about time for a different type of monsters to come out?"

"Customer! Please sell this to me for 200 gold just this one time! Please!"

At that point, Maetel had reached level 124. Artpe had reached level 115.

Chapter 17 – Our Sunbae-nim Did This? (1)

Artpe headed down the stair leading towards the 35th floor. He grinded his teeth as the Dungeon shamelessly showed no signs of ending.

“What kind of Dungeon is this!?”

“Aren’t all Dungeons like this, Artpe?”

Maetel’s innocent eyes shone as she asked the question. She had drawn the short end of the stick by coming into this brutal Dungeon as her first Dungeon. However, she didn’t have the proper perspective to know any better. She didn’t get tired of this place, and she didn’t complain. She possessed an essential virtue needed as a Dungeon explorer....

“Mmm. What I’m trying to say is.....”

Artpe couldn’t tell if this was a good thing or not. Therefore, he evaded giving an answer by stroking her head. In turn, Maetel’s eyes narrowed in pleasure as if she was a cat. Mycenae had left behind her cart to look at them. She had a gentle look in her eyes as she spoke.

“It looks as if you are training an animal, customer.”

“Shut up. I want 245 gold.”

“You said you’ll sell it to me for 230 gold a moment ago!?”

“The price on items aren’t fixed. The price can fluctuate depending on my condition or if the other person is being rude. Let’s see... Right now it should be 247.....”

“Two hundred forty five gold! I’ll buy it!”

At this rate, Mycenae knew the price might increase further, so she quickly pushed the money towards him.

“Here.”

“Koo-oooooooooooh.”

Artpe grinned as he handed her the item. Mycenae used her observation magic to check the item, and she let out a groan.

“Kook. As expected, it is a really good weapon.... Your ability to price an item is really uncanny. It makes me want to recruit you into the Anywhere company.”

“You won’t steal Artpe away from me, ajumma!”

“I’m really not an ajumma!”

Maetel, who had been standing there like a lamb, quickly hid Artpe behind her. Then she bared her teeth towards Mycenae. It made one wonder if she was a dog or some form of an animal in her previous life. Artpe patted Maetel, who was seriously worried.

“Even if I wanted to go, I won’t be able to. Don’t worry about it. Anyways, if you sell that item to anyone, you’ll be unable to handle the aftermath. Be careful.”

The identity of the artifact handed over to Mycenae was a Blood Gold Halberd, which held the curse of madness.

It accelerated the destruction of the user’s mind as a powerful downside, but the weapon would allow one to destroy all enemies and allies alike.

However, Maetel already had control over her Berserk skill, so it was a useless weapon for her. Moreover, the weapon was too heavy for Artpe to wield.

Still, it would be an attractive option to most adventurers or mercenaries. The weapon would lead the user down a path of destruction, yet ambition made people take up such weapons. It was a trait inherent in all humans.

“Hoo hoo. As a merchant, my duty is to sell it at a high price. It is beyond my province to determine, who becomes the owner of an item.”

“You are an unscrupulous trader.”

Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he took out 100 gold from his pouch, and he pushed it towards Mycenae. She already knew what he would ask for. Mycenae didn't give a reply as she took the money. Then she prepared the potions, water and ration.

In the past year, she had appeared each time they moved onto the next floor. She monopolized the trade with them as they moved from the 6th floor to the 34th floor. This type of trade was almost automatic.

“Excuse me, customer.”

She put together items worth 100 gold with no frills. Mycenae asked a question as she divided the items between Artpe and Maetel.

“What is the identity of this Dungeon? Why does it continue to go on like this? Does it perhaps have a tunnel leading to the demon world at the end?”

“We are exploring this place to find that answer.”

“You aren't able to come up with a conjecture using your ability?”

Mycenae had a truly surprised expression on her face. Artpe snorted.

“I think you have too high of an opinion in regards to my ability.”

“As the number of floor gets deeper, the items that are coming out are increasingly to my liking. From my perspective, I wouldn't mind if the Dungeon goes on for another 100 floors.... Still, it is clear that this Dungeon wasn't formed naturally. You probably already guessed this, right?”

“Yes.”

Artpe's nodded his head in a self-possessed manner. Then he

looked down at the stairway leading to the 35th floor.

Ghouls that were around 2 levels higher than the ones on the 34th floor was probably waiting for them on the next floor. If not, there would be a single jump in difficulty, and new monsters might show up.

“This Dungeon was created by someone with a clear goal in mind. It is true and definite that the two of us aren’t challengers that are compatible with that goal.”

“Normally, one would usually search the history of the region gain some clues about the Dungeon. If you want such a research done, I can do it for you. I’ll gladly accept a commission to research about the history of this region....”

“I’ll see you later, ajumma.”

“I knew you will answer in such a way.”

Mycenae grumbled as she went away. She notched another loss to him. She accepted the clean loss as she disappeared alongside the light.

However, after he sent her away, her words made him become mired in his thoughts again.

‘The history of this region.....?’

According to his knowledge, this region was where the hero was born. There hadn’t been anything special. It was a place where there was a normal town near the mountain. He knew from his past life that nothing much had occurred here.

On the other hand, how could there be nothing here? Even now, he was in a strange Dungeon that was made by someone.

Maybe, this place was hidden? What if this place was shielded from the eyes of the hero and Demon King?

In the past, the hero hadn’t wanted to desecrate a grave, because she was raised properly by her family. It could have also been the

fact that she was quickly sent packing to the royal palace as if she was some fragile glass statue. In the end, she hadn't discovered this place. Was there some enormous secret hidden here?

‘What happened here in the past? Did something of significance happen here?’

He had no way of finding out. Even if Artpe had the Read All Creation ability, he couldn't see into the past to a time when he wasn't alive. It was impossible.

On the other hand, if such a thing was possible.....

“Artpe.....?”

“.....it's nothing.”

Maetel was looking at his face with a worried look in her eyes. Artpe shook his head to dislodge such thoughts, and he answered her. Unexpectedly, Maetel looked slightly wistful.

“Your face was incredibly serious and dashing.”

“Hmmp. That kind of sweet words will only work against the Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon king's army.”

This was why such words worked on him. It was a direct hit. Artpe let out a fake cough as he tried to hide the fullness he felt within his heart.

He didn't know what would appear in front of them. It was something that couldn't be confirmed unless one saw it with one's eyes. He also knew that priority of this Dungeon had changed when he found out how the Dungeon was structured.

In other words, they were too far down the road to back off now.

‘In my past life, the hero wasted five years of her life at the castle. We have a lot of time to spare.’

Of course, even if Artpe had used all types of methods to focus on leveling up, it was unclear as to whether he would have been able to achieve a better result than this.

They would have missed out on fighting a horde of Skeletons linked by a rare magic called Record Link. They would have missed out on the precious EXP, and the artifacts they received as reward. They wouldn't have been amass this much fortune.

The factor that tipped the scale was the fact that Artpe and Maetel was able to develop so many high quality Skills here. It was crazy. If they hadn't drawn this Dungeon as their first starting place, he wondered if they would have been able to develop skills like Berserk and Mana Link.

Even if they continued to stay inside the Dungeon for five years, it wouldn't impede with their development.

'Ah. Of course, I have to get out of here and find those places as soon as possible.....'

Artpe possessed the memories of his past life, so he had several significant advantages he could acquire for himself. He was talking about spell books of great magic, ancient ruins and the like.

While Artpe battled within the Dungeon, he created a hierarchy of which goodies he will go for first. He would gain enough level in the Dungeon where they would be able to travel the world without worry. They will start traveling according to the list he had made.

This was why they didn't have time to hesitate or look back on what had already occurred. It didn't matter what waited for them. They would move forward. This was the will of Maetel and Artpe even if their destination differed!

After they smoothly defeat the Demon King, he would have the means to be able to raise cows in the countryside. At that time, he would be done with Maetel! He didn't care if she wanted to become the queen of a country or a female pope of a religion she built. She was free to do whatever she wanted!

Until that time arrived, Artpe and Maetel had to live a healthy and well-off life. In the immediate future, they would have to pass

this Dungeon without any complications.

“Aren’t you tired, Maetel? Shall we head down after we sleep?”

“I’m not tired, Artpe. What about you, Artpe? Do you want to use my lap as a pillow?”

“I’m also not tired.”

“Tsk.”

Maetel grumbled as if she was dissatisfied with his answer. Artpe led Maetel down to the Dungeon’s 35th floor.

At that moment, a powerful vibration shook the Dungeon. Accompanying the tremor, a wet and moldy voice could be heard in their ears.

[This test has been maintained for a very long time.]

‘That is a pretty ominous introduction!?’

It was as if a legendary figure was about to step forward from the darkness if they took a step forward. It was a line given by a being, who would drop the adventurers into hell!

“Hey, let’s head back for a moment.”

[Denied.]

When he heard the introductory line emanating from the darkness, Artpe immediately knew something was wrong. He quickly ordered a retreat as soon as they stepped onto this floor. However, the way back to the 34th floor was blocked.

[You bastards are only allowed to go forward.]

“You talk a pretty good game... Ooh?”

Artpe was clicking his tongue as he tried to use his Mana. However, the torches mounted on the wall started to light up in order starting from the nearest torches. The light from the fire revealed the layout of the 35th floor. Artpe groaned when he saw them.

“....crazy.”

“Look at them, Artpe....”

They were in a really large square, and there were a very, very ,very ,very ,very ,very large number of armored knights filling the place. The armored knights boasted a much more domineering spirit compared to the Ghouls. It was obvious that Undeads were within the armor.

[We’ve been waiting for you, destroyer of rules.]

[Insolent brat. You are the honey tongued brat that defies logic.]

[Your judgement is close at hand.]

Even in death, these beings hadn’t forgotten the will and techniques carved into their bodies. They were knights, who had a sense of self. They were Death Knights. All of them were powerful, and they were all over level 150. There were 500 of them.

If a normal level 120 party was to fight this group, the possibility of them winning was uncertain.

The one standing in the lead raised its bastard sword towards Artpe as its helmet rattled.

[You have caused dishonor to all of us. You have corrupted the pure hero by spitting on our intent. You have looked down on our power. Your misguided will is now encased in a powerful body, and the worst of the situation has come to pass. You made fool of fate. You connected things that shouldn’t be connected, and you severed things you shouldn’t have severed.]

All the Death Knights followed the one in the lead as they pointed their swords towards Artpe. During all of this, they hadn’t shown much hostility towards Maetel. They directed all their hate towards Artpe as if he was their mortal enemy. It annoyed Artpe.

These bastards were quick in assessing the situation!

[Still, we cannot deny the fact that you are a hero. This is why we

will give you this last chance. If you take this last test properly, we will believe in this reality that had be turned on its head. We will trust in the hope blooming from within the darkness that will cause change to the future. We will go back to sleep.]

“No, you don’t really have to believe in me.”

The ominous feeling was increasing as time passed. Artpe readied the only specialty magic he possessed. He readied himself to use Hyper Rubbing, then he grasped Maetel’s shoulder. It was signal for her to get ready for battle. It also told her to be careful of their enemies.

“Don’t worry about it, Artpe.”

Even in such a situation, Maetel’s expression was calm. In the past year, her features had matured considerably. She already looked like an angel, but her beautiful smile made her look like an archangel. She gave a reassurance to Artpe.

“I’ll protect Artpe. Artpe will protect me in return?”

“....yes. I trust you.”

The shield on Artpe’s back rose into the air. He only had to repair the shield couple times as they descended from the 6th floor to the 35th floor. This was why the shield hadn’t been replaced with other weapons. It was a rare artifact that gave a weak curse to whatever it hit. If he was with the shield, there was nothing for him to fear!

[When the battle starts, he might use cheap tactics to play us off against each other.]

However, the enemies he would face were excessively resolute in defending against mental warfare.

[This is why we will force the activation of the final test, so you can face it.]

“Uh, hey... Wait a moment, you guys.”

Artpe tried to speak up when he realized what they were about to do, but the Death Knights just glared at Artpe as they plunged their swords into their hearts. Their Mana flooded forth! The restriction of the Record Link made it impossible to attack one's comrades, but it seemed suicide was possible!

As he faced the domineering sight, Artpe yelled out in shock.

“You bastards will be penalized even if you kill yourselves!”

[We are already Undead!]

The 499 Death Knights crumbled in place. The oppressive energy from each of the Death Knights flowed towards the single Death Knight standing in the middle.

It happened when Artpe and Maetel was struck dumb by the ridiculous sight.

[I'm ready, heroes.]

The power of the armored knights were gathered into a single being, and 'It' was reborn as a horrible nightmare. It made a declaration as it pointed its long sword towards the two heroes.

[The test will start.]

Chapter 18 – Our Sunbae-nim Did This? (2)

“I’ll use Berserk, Artpe!”

[You don’t have the luxury to chat right now!]

The bastard immediately came at them. The only thing that remained behind the party was the wall blocking the way back up. Consequently, Maetel didn’t hesitate in activating her Berserk skill. She ran forward to face the enemy.

“Tsk. I don’t like the situation dictating our actions.....”

Artpe grumbled as he immediately activated the Mana Link. He connected himself to Maetel. Then he let the shield rotate as a means to protect himself. He was cautious as he descended the stairs. His eyes took in the sight of Maetel and the Death Knight clashing against each other.

[As expected, you are overwhelming more powerful when you use your sword compared to the actual strength you possess. However, you won’t be able to become a hero using a sword steeped in rage!]

“I’m the one swinging this sword, so I don’t care what helps me! I don’t care if it is anger, sadness or happiness. I’ll win against you to protect Artpe! You will never lay a hand on Artpe!”

[If I’m anything like the enemies you faced up until now, you would have been able to accomplish that. However, the experience and power of 500 Death knights were combined to complete me. How dare you speak such arrogant and impudent words towards me!]

The powerful sound of Maetel and the Death Knight exchanging blows with their swords could be heard. Of course, the one taking damage and retreating was Maetel. If she didn’t have the gears protecting her wrists, she would have been severely hurt.

“Koohk....!”

“Tsk. When there were 500 separate monsters, it was a fight with a decent odds. You were cheap in activating the power of Record Link using suicide.....”

[You spout some silly words.]

Maetel already had a cheat-like physical ability compared to her actual level. On top of that, she was able also able to activate the Berserk skill. She could pretty much toy with the level 150 Death Knights at her leisure. However, the enemy she was facing right now was a monster created by combining 500 Death Knights using the Record Link.

Artpe had immediately used his Read All Creation ability to check the monster. The overall difference in ability was devastating. The fact that Maetel was able to instantly regain her stance after weathering through the impact was almost miraculous. She was even charging towards the monster.

[The difference in our power is clear. Oh hero. Will you still get in my way to protect that contemptible boy? Will you do so when the only thing waiting for you is despair and death? Will you sacrifice yourself until the end for a complete stranger?]

“Hoohp.”

Maetel didn't reply to its words. She just charged the monster.

The magical energy within the bastard sword had been well-developed by her. Her powerful swings were knocking back the long sword.

[What the hell!?!]

Surprisingly, she didn't get pushed back this time! When one took in the difference in battle capability, this was a surprising development. Maetel's spirit rose higher as she pushed back against the monster. She yelled out in a fierce manner.

“What happened to the spirit that you displayed before? Wasn't it supposed to be the power of 500 of your kind? It seems you don't

have much to show for it right now!”

[Kooh, ha-ah! This was merely a coincidence!]

The armored knight dismissed it as a coincidence, but Artpe immediately knew what had happened through his Read All Creation ability.

While Maetel was using her Swordsmanship, she was using a trick to strengthen her body using Unarmed Combat. It looked as if she was lightly lashing out with her sword, but she was using her Bash skill. This was how she was able to fight on par with the Death Knight.

‘It sounds easy, but she is using two basic battle skill, while using an active skill. When she exchanged blow with the monster, she realized her deficiency, and she patched up the deficiency using the other skills. I thought I had figured her out, but a 13 year old girl has this much of battle capability.....’

Aside from the Mana consumption, the mental and stamina drain should be incredibly high, yet she was doing it all so effortlessly. The sight of her made his blood curdle, and at the same time, it made him admire her.

She was fighting with the armored knight, yet she put on a face as if nothing was wrong. She checked up on Artpe.

“Artpe. Your mana.....”

“I have enough.”

In truth, he didn’t know if he had enough. If she continued to consume magical energy at this pace, even Artpe would run out of Mana.

However, Artpe didn’t want Maetel to look back at him, so he spoke confidently. Of course, he would consume a Mana potion in secret.

“All right.”

Maetel was never suspicious of Artpe. She always trusted him, so a grin appeared on her face when she heard his words. She once again surged forward against her enemy using the Bash skill.

“Then I’ll be able to win. Haahhhhhp!”

Once again, Maetel and the Death Knight exchanged blows. Maetel was able to perfectly execute the Bash skill using her sword, and she struck the same location on the long sword she had hit before. However, the Death Knight quickly wised up to her tactic. The armored knight let out a shout as it twisted its sword. The impact point on the sword was changed.

[You are pretty clever. I thought the only thing within your head was love, lust and anger.]

“That’s right. I only have that.... However, that will be enough for me!”

[How laughable!]

Even if its power and experience was all gathered into a single being, it still possessed equipment that was only around level 150. It was an excellent battle plan to attack the weapon rather than the monster itself.

No one had taught her this tactic, yet she was carrying it out. It was unknown as to whether she understood what she was doing.

[Your intentions are commendable, but will it really be enough? Even now I can feel your anger deepen. Your rationality is fading, and it is being encroached by your instincts. It blunts your sword. Just this fact allows me to get slowly stronger. I just have to wait for the moment when my sword will be able to pierce through your heart.]

“There is no way I’ll let you do as you please.”

Maetel’s clash with the Death Knight was gradually intensifying. Maetel’s swordsmanship had been trained through live battles, and she only attacked the Death Knight’s weak points. The Death

Knight used all its veteran know-how to turn away all her sword strikes.

Both their attacks failed to touch each other's defensive gear. The weapons were taking the brunt of the damage.

[Koohk, koo-hah.....! You don't stand a chance!]

“That is my line!”

The Death Knight innocently believed that Maetel had reached the pinnacle of her skills. However, only Artpe knew the truth.

The answer was simple. Maetel was improving even now. The effects of the Berserk skill didn't dull her sword. Instead, her senses had sharpened to the extreme.

[Weak! It'll be impossible for you if you keep this up!]

“Yes, I am weak.. However, I'll become stronger.....!”

[If someone could get stronger just by saying so, this world wouldn't have practitioners!]

Sword clashed against sword. The Death Knight's shield was swung towards Maetel's head, yet it passed through the air in vain.

Afterwards, Maetel kicked the bastard in its knee, and the Death Knight's stance was thrown off by a marginal amount. She immediately followed it up with a sword strike. This was a technique she hadn't shown up until now.

[Ha!]

“Koo-oohk!”

It was as the Death Knight had said before, she never had the chance to swing her weapon against an enemy that was on par with her. However, for the first time, she faced an enemy that seemed to be a knight, and she had no choice but to fight it using high grade weapon skills.

By chance, this opportunity gave her a chance to consolidate all

her techniques.

In the past, she had been swinging her sword by following her instinct, but now she had seen how others handled their swords. She now knew how she had to move her body. Her body figured out how maximize the power of her sword. Basically, the Death Knight had become her tutor for a day.

[Maetel]

[Level – 124]

[Swordsmanship Lv19]

[Unarmed Combat Lv16]

In real time, her Unarmed Combat skill and Swordsmanship skill was rising . Her simple and brutal sword strikes were now showing variations and subtlety. There was a different level of power within her when she took a step forward or backwards.

The strikes she hadn't been able to withstand before was being blocked with impunity. In the beginning, the Death Knight had known where the sword strikes would be coming from, but she struck at its long sword before the Death Knight realized it was coming. At that moment, the Death Knight couldn't help, but come to a realization.

[You bitch.... How.....!?!]

“Do you have nothing else you can show me?.... If so, you can't win against me.”

[How.... What the hell is this?]

There was a difference between knowing an answer, and the answer being etched into your body. However, the two things were basically interchangeable for Maetel.

It was fucked up. She was such a ridiculous genius that such a messed up thing was possible.

[You are truly a marvel. When you first came into the Dungeon, I

couldn't believe how inexperienced you were. What caused you to be like this? You are with such an underhanded person. How can your pure mind not deteriorate by being associated with him?]

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

[Haht!]

Maetel didn't give a reply as she used her Bash skill. Of course, her Bash skill had been evolving during the battle. The Death Knight had to exert much more power to block her strikes. However, the Death Knight still had some room to breathe.

[Even if you are able to grow quickly, there must be a wall you cannot jump over! In the end, you will fall to your knees and die. Do you realize the difference in the quantity of Mana we possess? Let's see how long you can keep swinging your sword with such force.]

“I won't..... I will protect Artpe!”

[You are putting your life on the line for a worthless human! Is your life worth so little, hero? You shouldn't be sacrificing yourself for a man like him! You have to sacrifice yourself for humanity!]

“I'll choose who I'll protect! I don't care about the people I have yet to meet! The most precious person to me is Artpe!”

If someone else saw this sight, one would think this was the scene before the climax where each side argued their side was righteous. In truth, this was only a boss battle within a beginner's Dungeon. Artpe was a bit baffled as he watched the fierce fight from the back.

“That bastard is treating me as if I'm the Demon King....”

When Artpe's party entered the 35th floor, he remembered that the rage of all the Death Knights had been focused on him.

Currently, the Death Knight was stuck facing Maetel, because Artpe's defense was absolute. If Artpe gave it a sliver of

opportunity, the Death Knight would immediately try to behead Artpe.

If Artpe was killed, the Mana Link between the two of them would be dismissed. In turn, Maetel wouldn't be able to maintain her Berserk skill. He was using a valid tactic.

'I'm unable to step forward into the battle. I have to wait knowing my fate is uncertain. This situation is so befitting the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings that I have no words to say in rebuttal.'

If his life wasn't on the line, he wouldn't have cared if he was the main character or an extra. However, his head would be severed from his body when the hero gets slightly tired. It was a pathetic situation to be in.

'Still, I'm no longer the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly King.'

Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he raised his shield.

It seemed the bastard was too shocked by Maetel's talent that it was under a misconception. Maetel did have incredible talent, which could astound anyone. However, the person responsible for complicating the situation was Artpe. He had a rotten smile on his face.

The Death Knight probably thought Artpe would put down his guard if it focused on Maetel. Of course, that wouldn't happen. Artpe was acting as if he was spinning his shield, but he had already emitted several hundred to several thousand Mana Threads. In the process, he had already consumed five bottles of Mana potion. He only had a single Mana Potion left.

'The Record Link is still covering the entirety of the Dungeon.'

To be precise, it covered the Dungeon from the 6th floor to the 35th floor. If Artpe hadn't tinkered with it, they would have had to fight all the monsters on the 6th floor. They would have died.

Anyways, Artpe had messed with the Record Link placed over the Dungeon, and he had divided the Dungeon back into multiple floors. This meant the newly born monsters past the 6th floor had no idea what was going on. They would only be linked to the monsters on the same floor, and they had to wait until the challengers arrived. This would remain so until he canceled what he did to the Record Link.

So what if....

“What would happen if I undid the restriction placed on the Record Link? Have you thought about it?”

Artpe intentionally spoke those words aloud. He did it to create an opening.

[What.....?]

“Hoohp!”

His plan was very effective. For a brief moment, it stopped swinging its sword. As if she had been waiting for this moment, Maetel kicked off the ground as she leapt towards the Death Knight. She stabbed towards its sword. A clear sound rang out, and the Death Knight’s sword broke in the middle.

[Koohk!]

The Death Knight finally regained its senses. It took a half step backwards to regain its stance. It pushed its shield slightly forward, and it unsheathed a secondary weapon. It gripped the long dagger as it glared at Maetel and Artpe.

[What do you think you can accomplish by breaking my sword, hero? I’ve already discerned the fact that you are consuming Mana at an alarming rate. Also, do you think you can shake me with such words, boy with the rotten eyes? There is no way you’ll do something that would only be beneficial to us.]

“No, you aren’t entirely correct.”

Record Link was a skill that brought together the record of everything tied together by the magic. It gathered battle experience, skill, magical energy and stamina in one place.

However, Record Link possessed a really big weakness. There were multiple reason why this magic spell was banned. However, this particular weakness was the most fatal and annoying reason of them all.

“Why do you think I’ve raised this shield up until now? If you think hard on it, you might figure it out....”

Maetel was breathing roughly as she stoked the rage from within as she fought the Death Knight. The Death Knight had no choice, but to retreat. It tried to keep calm as it looked for a chance to counterattack. Artpe grinned as he looked at the Death Knight.

“Ha! Maetel, you should look out for the falling monsters and the upheaval of your surrounding!”

He had extended several thousand Mana Threads to its limits. He had tied off parts of the Record Link to cause change to it. He had done this only a year ago.

Now he unravelled all the changes he had caused!

“Kyahhhhhhhhk!”

[Did you really.....!]

The Dungeon shook. The Dungeon, which had been separated into floors, was being combined into a single floor in short order! The Record Link, which had been tied off into small pieces, was whole again. It once again surrounded the entirety of the Dungeon.

The ceilings that separated the 6th floor to the 35th floor melted away in an instant. Skeletons and Ghouls that had reformed in the past year were once again tied to the Record Link. Now they were falling from above. It was a sight that had a strong resemblance to hell!

[Are you perhaps trying to create an opening by creating a mess!? It was in vain. What you did right now is called an idiotic mistake....]

“It was impossible to do this one year ago, because my stamina and magical energy was lacking. It was impossible even half a year ago!”

Artpe threw his shield into the air. His shield throw technique had matured in the past year. He was able to throw it fast and high. He quickly and ruthlessly killed all the falling Zombies and Ghouls.

“However, it is possible now. I was pretty meticulous in preparing for this!”

The Record Link regained its full power. This meant all the record of the dead monsters would be shared with the Death Knight.

Their power, intellect, stamina, magical energy, record, and.....

[Koohk. You bastard.....!?!]

“You’ll gain all the curses I placed on all of them.”

The curse was stacking as he killed all the monsters. In a flash, the Death Knight’s movements slowed. He had a twisted smile on his face as he watched the shocked Death Knight.

It was an evil smile that was well-matched with the Demon King.

Chapter 19 – Our Sunbae-nim Did This? (3)

[This is ridiculous. There is no way the curses placed on the dead will be transferred.....]

“Yes, they no longer exist, but they haven’t died yet. You carry them on your back! They are placed inside your chest! Each one of them continue to live on as part of you. Isn’t that right?”

In a flash, Artpe was able to apply several dozen Slowdown curse on the Death Knight. It creaked as it moved. It was as if the Death Knight was wearing a rusted armor. Artpe taunted it.

[Koo-hook.....!]

However, it had no way of counteracting the effect. This effect was what made the Record Link such a dangerous magic! It prevented the death of beings that should be dead, and all their power was transferred. Basically, they could live on within another entity!

“This is why even the weakest curse will be transferred to you. If I want to have numerous curses placed on you.... I just have to kill them all.”

Artpe forcefully swung his hand as the shield flew through the air. The shield moved based on his will. Even now, the shield was slicing through the falling Zombies and Ghouls.

Its bears repeating that the curse contained within the shield was weak. It was able to attach a weak slowdown effect on its target, but the effect could be stacked.

As each Undead fell from the sky, Artpe cut them into pieces with his shield. It felt as if shackles were being placed all over the Death Knight’s body every time an Undead was killed.

[Kooo-ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Of course, the one left behind will be the one to suffer. This is

the biggest reason why the Record Link was banned. If you didn't know that, you should study up on it. Well, it is too late for you to do so."

Artpe laughed uproariously. The Death Knight had tried to attack him, yet his efforts were in vain, since Maetel had been able to hold it back. It had been a long long time, since he had felt this much mirth.

“It is rare to find a curse that can stack infinitely. Why do you think I haven’t scrapped this lousy shield? Why do you think I was frugal in its use?”

[Nooo wayyyy. Noooooooooooooo waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaay.
Youuuuuuuuuuuuu Baaaaaaaaaaa-ssssssssssssss-taaaaaaaaaaaard.]

“Yes.”

The power of the slowdown curse within the shield had a widespread effect of causing minuscule slowdown on the target's intelligence, stamina, Mana and skills. The Death Knight was feeling the cumulative effect of over hundred of these curses. The speed of Death Knight's thought process and the ability to speak had slowed down to a ridiculous degree.

“Yes. I, Artpe-nim, prepared for the boss battle from the beginning. I readied all of this for this day when I would dispel the restriction I placed on the Record Link!”

Artpe sneered at the Death Knight, and he took the coolest pose he could come up with for maximum effect. He used to be one of the Four Heavenly King of the Demon King's army. He was a being that acted as if his arrogance had no bounds! He bragged whenever he gained a sliver of advantage over his enemies! He did this in the most spiteful and shameless manner!

“Artpе is too cool!”

[Koooooooooh-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

While Artpe was busy posing, the shield tirelessly cut through

the body of the falling Zombies and Ghouls.

He had sharpened the edges of the shield in anticipation for this day. There was no way its edges would dull right now. The number of monsters killed went from several dozen to several hundred then to several thousand.

[Ggoo-oooooooooh, ooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooooh.]

At this point in time, the Death Knight had for all intents and purposes become worse than a level 3 Goblin. The Undead, who tried to test the heroes, had run out of all its opportunities.

It hadn't even been able to put up a good fight. It hadn't been able to use its secret technique. It had been unable to give its cool final line nor was it able to lecture the heroes. It had pathetically frozen in place before it was able to punish Artpe.

“Eh-eet.”

Meanwhile, Maetel was being sensible by distancing herself from the Death Knight. If she killed the Death Knight right now, its power would be transferred into the Zombies and Ghouls. They would harden to a point where they wouldn't be able to handle them. She had arrived at a very logical conclusion.

“No, Maetel!”

Maetel was patting herself on the back when Artpe gave her instructions to the contrary.

“If that bastard kills itself in a suicide, our reward will become infinitely worse! We don't want to receive dropped items from really high level Zombies or Ghouls! We want the dropped items of a Death Knight created from gathering all the energy through Record Link! You have to prevent it from killing itself!”

“Ah, all right! As expected, Artpe is smart!”

Who in the world would call these wicked people as being heroes! They were superbly rotten to the core that even the Demon King

would come study under their tutelage!

The Death Knight watched Maetel break through the flood of monsters falling from the sky, and she immediately disarmed it. It was vexed that it couldn't move to stop her, but Artpe had killed an excessive amount of cursed monsters. It was hard for the Death Knight to even lift a single finger.

[Cheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeaaaaaaaaaaaaappp

“Ah. It is game over for it since the curse has stacked this much. Maetel, you should now help me kill the others.”

“Yes!”

They had descended this Dungeon for the past year, so they were well versed in what to do now. There were a lot of monsters tied to the Record Link right now. It was as if someone had barfed them all up. It was a good thing Artpe and Maetel had faced all of them before while they came down here. If not, they wouldn't have stood a chance.

“Eh-eet, eh-eet.”

[Oooooooooohhhhhhhhhhhhhng.]

[Ggeeeeeeeeeeeeeee, ggeeeeeeeeeeeeeee.]

The Death Knight didn't tie himself to so many beings so that it would die after twitching slowly across the ground like a cicada larva. Of course, Artpe and Maetel didn't care about that!

Maetel had made sure to cripple the Death Knight so it couldn't kill itself. Then she put away her sword as she beat the nearby monsters to death using a bone club.

Artpе hummed as he controlled the shield. By the time he killed all of them, the shield would become unusable. However, this shield was only useful for this Dungeon. He didn't care what happened to it after this.

“You are really a genius, Artpe.”

“Yes, I do think I’m somewhat of a genius. Maetel is also quite the genius.”

“Thank you! I think I fought fairly well even if I say so myself!”

The two heroes kept praising each other as they cleared the Dungeon in a friendly manner. The Death Knight was rolling around on the floor like a larvae, so what could mere Zombies and Ghouls do against them! It was as if they were hit by lightning!

The lucky ones died immediately after they hit the floor. The unlucky ones already had the misfortune of being Undead, yet they were in a situation where they couldn’t even move properly. They were only able to blink their eyes until it was their turn to die.

[Goo-oooh.]

It was unknown as to who had created this Dungeon, but at the very least, the creator of this Dungeon probably didn’t place the Record Link expecting to see such a sight! This wasn’t a Dungeon that was meant to grow candidates for becoming the Demon King! This was a place built to develop heroes! It was the builder’s mistake in assuming that all heroes were goody two shoes pushovers.

‘Ah. Ahhhhhhhhh......’

The Death Knight had lost both its arms, and it had been completely disarmed. As it rolled around the floor, the Death Knight watched the two evil heroes clear the Zombies and Ghouls.

Every time one of the Undead died, a minuscule amount of power was coming in towards the Death Knight. Most of them were cursed, so it was a scary proposition where the slowdown effect was much higher than the strengthening effect. It had lost the power to move around a long time ago, and now it was having a hard time thinking.

The Death Knighted lamented over its misfortune. It had failed to read Artpe’s outrageous abilities, so it mocked itself on its own

ignorance. It moaned at the sight of the broken Dungeon. The Death Knight wondered if it could really entrust it all to them.....

It decided not to think about it anymore.

Four days passed. It took a long time even though the two were killing defenseless monsters.

From the midpoint on, the records of monsters had started to overlap too much. From that point on, the constitution of the remaining Undead became unnecessarily high. This was why it was taking so long. The only danger that posed a threat to the two heroes was them becoming too tired, and falling asleep in front of the monsters.

“Did we really kill all of them?”

“Yes, we killed every single one of them. We even killed the ones stuck up there.”

“Yes, I also confirmed it.”

This Dungeon was ridiculously large and deep. It took him around 30 minutes to sweep the place for monsters that were still alive with his Read All Creation ability.

However, it was all over now. There was only one monster left in the entire Dungeon. It was the Death Knight that was only capable of rolling around on the floor.

“Hmmm.”

Artpe wanted to ask if it wanted have its last words, but there was no response from the Death Knight even after Artpe pounded on it. It was acting like a normal corpse.

“Artpe, you have to kill it. Currently, my level is too high compared to yours. We have to balance it out.”

“I knew you would say that.”

Artpe raised his shield. He had killed numerous monsters with it so it was damaged and deformed. It was hard to call it a shield

now. It was basically a lump of metal.

He wondered if the Death Knight would be satisfied with being killed by a lump of metal, which was neither a weapon nor a defensive gear. Of course, it was no concern of his.

“Koohk. Eh-eet. Crap. It is so damn hard.”

Artpe diligently pounded the Death Knight with the lump of metal. However, the Death Knight had absorbed all the records to reach its final form, so it wouldn't die from an attack of that caliber. Artpe had no choice, but to forcefully push his Mana into the lump of metal.

“If you don't die from this, I'll call you my teacher!”

He placed the lump of metal beneath the Death Knight's body, and he immediately used the Hyper Rubbing spell. The lump of metal rubbed against the Death Knight with a ludicrous amount of force!

It couldn't be helped. The surface of the Death Knight's body touching the lump of metal was starting to fracture a little bit. It was a brutal sight! It made one wonder if this was some new form of torture!

[Go-oooooooooooooooooh.]

It seemed the Death Knight wanted to say something, but its reaction had slowed down too much. One couldn't tell what it was trying to say. Artpe wanted to end its misery, so he increased his Mana output. The rubbing became more fierce, and it was accompanied by a change.

“Ah. The lump of metal is becoming red-hot!”

“It's a Mana reaction. That lump of metal used to be an Artifact. The Mana infused within it will become agitated by the Mana I injected. It'll cause an explosion. The explosion caused by detonating an Artifact is much stronger than detonating a simple rock. You should keep that in mind.”

“Then why did you activate the Hyper Rubbing?”

“I just wanted to tease that bastard.... Duck!”

At that moment, the lump of metal exploded! The Death Knight received the entirety of the incredible force generated by the explosion. As a result, it was able to find its eternal rest. It probably would have been much happier by the fact that it was taken out this way.

“Koo-ooooooooooooooooooh.”

“Koohp.”

This was obvious, but an incredible amount of EXP entered into Artpe and Maetel when the Death Knight was killed. The primary form of the completed Death Knight had been incredible already, but the Dungeon had been restored to its original form. All the record of the monsters were gathered into a single being! This result was to be expected.

“Artpe. It feels as if my head is going to split open-ahhhhh.”

“Don’t worry. I feel the same way.... Koo-heck.”

Even in his previous life, he had never experience such successive level ups. Mana filled up within his body as it kept evolving. It put a great amount of stress on his mind.

“Ughhh, Artpe.”

Artpe was trying to hold back the urge to lose consciousness when he heard Maetel calling for him. He raised his head to respond to her when he realized why she had called out to him.

“Wow. This is nuts.”

“Ggoo-ooooooooooh.”

Maybe, the killing of all the Monsters connected to the Record link was the impetus. The Dungeon was once again going through a change!

If more monsters came out once again, it would have been really annoying. Fortunately, this wasn't the case. The Dungeon was quickly losing its size. The square was also getting smaller, and the material making up the Dungeon was changing.

“This is as if..... Ah.”

The cherry on top was the fountain that appeared in the middle of the square. Maetel's body and mind was tired, so she was about to let out a shout of joy. As she was about to run towards the clear water, she paused to look back at Artpe.

“That's poisoned water, right! Aren't I right, Artpe!”

She thought she had shown sound judgment by stopping, so Maetel let out a fake cough.

He put on a bright smile as he faced her. He spoke to her..

“Nope, that is just regular water.”

Chapter 20 – Our Sunbae-nim Did This? (4)

“As expected, you finished this floor in couple days. The Anywhere company always.... Huh?”

Mycenae made her entrance as she gave a lively greeting. However, her eyes turned round when she realized the Dungeon looked entirely different from before. There were no stairways leading up or down. There was only a square, and the Dungeon’s ceiling, which was slowly descending. And.....

She saw the two brats taking a shower inside the fountain placed in the middle of the square.

“....did a curse perhaps lower your mental capacity?”

She wondered if they had lost their minds. She wanted to ask the question in the most tactful manner she could manage. Of course, it was worthless bringing it up with Artpe. He let out a snort as he looked over Mycenae with scorn in his eyes.

“W...what is it, customer?”

“Huh? Kyahhhhhhhk!”

“I want soap and clean underwear. I want it for Maetel and I.”

When Mycenae appeared, Maetel screamed as she hunched to hide her body. Artpe remained unbowed. He was confident as he threw the silver coin towards Mycenae. He gave a list of what he needed.

Since they hadn’t been able to get out of the Dungeon for the past year, Mycenae understood why Artpe and Maetel were familiar with each other’s nude form. However, she never expected him to be so bold in front of her! Mycenae’s face slightly reddened.

“You are a really rude customer. One silver won’t cover it!”

“Yes, that is why I’ll give you a second one.”

“Wait a moment, customer.”

Artpe used a very weak form of Hyper Rubbing. It was on the level of Soft Rubbing where it merely felt as if the spell was scrubbing him. He applied soap, and it automatically scrubbed his body. When Maetel saw this, she pestered him until he used the spell on her.

“Tsk. It can’t be helped. Here.”

“Ah-hee. This is ticklish. Hee-hee-hee-heek.”

“There really is nothing you cannot do with magic.....”

For a moment, Mycenae thought about heading back, but the sight of the broken body of the Death Knight weighed heavily on her mind.

Even if it had met its death, Mycenae could get a rough idea of its record, and Mana that had remained behind in the corpse. The Death Knight had the potential of being a big jackpot compared to any other monsters within this Dungeon.

Moreover, if there were no stairway leading downwards, it meant that they had reached the end of the Dungeon. In other words, this monster was the boss of the entire Dungeon. It was the Dungeon Boss!

“Are you going to sell something to me?”

“Wait until we clean ourselves.”

“I think the fountain will become polluted before you can clean yourself, customer.”

In truth, they hadn’t been able to properly wash their bodies for past year. Thankfully, the buildup of grime on their bodies were swept away every time they leveled up. They had survived relying on this mechanism.

Artpe and Maetel were thorough in washing their body. It took them exactly two hours to complete the task. It felt as if they were reborn. They even used the soap to wash their equipments made

out of cloth. They washed it with a vengeance as bubbles formed. Artpe wore the underwear handed to him by Mycenae, and he dried his robe with Mana before putting it on. Then he sat down on the floor.

“Hoo. I finally feel like I’m human again.”

“Now that you’ve washed yourself, you look a bit.... No, you are very handsome. If you grow a little bit more, you are going make many women cry.”

Artpe snorted as he dismissed Mycenae’s words. He checked on how Maetel was doing. As expected, she had already put on all her clothes. She was growling as she glared at Mycenae.

Did she think Mycenae was targeting Artpe? Maetel always acted daft. Artpe let out a sigh, and he lightly flicked her forehead.

“Let’s loot.”

“Yes!”

The gazes of Artpe, Maetel and Mycenae headed towards the corpse of the Death Knight. Artpe didn’t hesitate as he shot his Mana towards the corpse.

A bright light rose into the air, and as the light dimmed, three Artifacts revealed themselves. When Maetel saw one of them, she let out a shout with a bright light in her eyes.

“It’s a long sword!”

“It’s yours.”

“Yay!”

The long sword looked similar to the one used by the Death Knight. However, this one looked sharper and more durable. It even had the ability to spike the user’s Mana in an instant to shoot it towards a single location. It was an unbelievably great Artifact. It strengthened Maetel’s weakness of not having a long range attack.

The only downside was the fact that the level needed to equip it was quite high. One needed to be level 150.....

[Maetel]

[Level : 154]

“Excellent, Maetel. I have no more words to describe your cheat-like status.”

“Ee-hee-hee. If you praise me so much, I’ll be embarrassed.”

“It wasn’t a compliment.”

Artpe looked at his own reflection on the surface of the water. He checked his own level.

He was level 145. He had almost achieved a miracle by raising his level to 145, but he was clearly inferior to Maetel, who had climbed over the level 150 mark. He didn’t compare favorably to her.

He thought this from the beginning, but he didn’t see how it was possible for the Demon King to take over this world. The probability was less than 50%. In his past life, what were they thinking holding such a shining beacon of talent within the palace?

“Customer. The helmet....”

“I knew ajumma would covet it.”

On the other side, Mycenae’s eyes were fixed on a helmet that looked similar to what the Death Knight had been wearing. It looked incredibly sturdy, and it was an Artifact that was very well suited to carry out its original goal of protecting the user.

Yes, if he was being honest, the helmet was a much better Artifact than the long sword. However.....

[Revengeful Death Knight’s Helm]

[The curse will turn the wearer into a high rank Death Knight. When one equips the helm, all emotions and thought process will

be amplified. The wearer's Mana, skills and spells will be changed into having Darkness attribute, and it will be amplified. The wearer will grow by sucking in the energy of death.]

This was the quintessential cursed item. It was a ridiculous cursed item that could bring down an entire city if one wasn't careful. Artpe was aghast as he turned to look at Mycenae. He asked her a question.

“Do you really want to buy this, ajumma?”

“We, in the Anywhere company, firmly believe that items aren't capable of possessing sin. That is the purview of people.”

Mycenae's eyes refused to leave the helm. She knew it was a cursed item, yet she was sure it was an item that could bring her profit. Her eyes were the eyes of a merchant.

Of course, Artpe knew about the greed that one felt for good items and wealth. It was what made a merchant a merchant.... Still, he had seen the world through his Read All Creation ability in his past life. The world always flowed with blood, because of treasures.

He had always been surrounded by sea of blood thanks to his ability. This was why treasures didn't hold much appeal to him.

“There might come a day when you will regret this.”

“Do not worry about me, customer. I might not look it, but I've lived a very long time.”

Yes, it seemed his words weren't registering with her, because he was young. She was the sort of person that won't come to a realization until she experienced a big ordeal.

Artpe shrugged his shoulders as he handed her the helm. Mycenae put on a welcoming smile as she took the....

“780 gold.”

“Eek!”

“I know you’ll be selling it for over 1,000 gold. Don’t make a big fuss about this. Just give me the money.”

“You are young, and you’ve been stuck in this Dungeon for a year. So how are you so knowledgeable about the market prices!?”

In the end, she took the helm from him. Her hands shook as she handed over the pouch containing the gold.

“A large dimensional magic spell was placed on this pouch. The price of this pouch is 50 gold, so I’ve place 730 gold within. You probably don’t want to carry around the entirety of the 780 gold. Please do me a favor by taking this deal!”

“All right. I’ll overlook it.”

It was a plain looking leather pouch, yet it was worth 50 gold! Maetel’s eyes spun, but Artpe didn’t show any surprise. He took the pouch.

In truth, he possessed another dimensional pouch. There was around 400 gold within that pouch. Their party now possessed money approaching 1,200 gold.

“So, there is only one thing left. Isn’t this just an egg?”

“Ajumma. Does this really look like a normal egg?”

The long sword and the helm were artifacts that was well-matched with the Death Knight. However, everyone had a hard time accepting that the last item was dropped by a Death Knight.

It was an egg that was small, black, and oval-shaped. When one touched it, one could feel the pulse of life from within it. Maetel’s mouth salivated as she looked down at it.

“Do you think this will be tasty, Artpe?”

“I want you to think of it as something given birth by the Death Knight. Do you want to eat it when you know that fact?”

“I’m hungry!”

Did she really want to eat it? Artpe let out a sigh as he flicked Maetel on her forehead. Then he put away the egg.

“It is a Chaos Egg born artificially by the Record Link. It is ridiculous to think that death was able to give life, but.... Since the Record Link had rarely been used throughout history, it is tough to come to a definite conclusion.”

It would be funny if a Death Knight popped out from the Chaos Egg. However, he didn't that would be the case.

He had thoroughly checked it with his Read All Creation ability, but the only information he could glean was its name. Basically, he won't know what will be born until the Chaos Egg hatches.

“What will be born from it? If Artpe and my love can.....”

“I don't know what you are thinking about, but that won't happen.”

“Heeng. Artpe, stop being mean to me.”

He had no idea how he should incubate it. Artpe decided to put it within the inner pocket of his robe. If it broke, that was its fate. At that point, he'll just make scrambled eggs with it!

All the items left behind by the Death Knight was collected. Their levels had increased, and their skills had developed. Now they equipped their equipment over their clean bodies. Artpe felt refreshed as he waved his hand towards Mycenae. He was saying goodbye to her.

“You can go now, ajumma. You bought everything you wanted.”

“Why would I go? The most important Dungeon reward is still to come.”

Mycenae kept staring at the fountain placed in the middle of the square.

Artpe and Maetel had wasted a lot of water by washing themselves in it, but the fountain kept pumping out clear water

from some unknown place. It looked as if Mycenae believed that there was a secret kept within it.

“I won’t give that up.”

“As always, I just want to purchase items at a fair price.....”

“Ajumma.”

Artpe smiled sweetly. Mycenae had remarked on this fact before, but his charming smile wasn’t something that should exist on the face of a thirteen year old.

“I’ll see you again next time.”

“Heht.....”

For a brief moment, she had been mesmerized by his smile. However, she recovered her wits when she heard the cold voice that slipped out of Artpe’s mouth.

Her cheeks puffed out, and she banged on her blameless cart. She shouted towards him.

“Ha. I really can’t win against you. All right. I just have to leave, right? Please look kindly on the Anywhere company in the future! Tsk!”

Mycenae disappeared from where she had been standing. Maetel grumbled as she stared at the spot where Mycenae had disappeared.

“I don’t like that ajumma.”

“That ajumma is neither good or bad. She is only a merchant, who puts profit above all else. We were able purchase supply without much fuss thanks to the ajumma. Moreover, we were able to get decent price for the items we sold.”

Actually, he had received a very generous amount, but Artpe didn’t want to get into that topic here. He slowly walked towards the fountain.

Yes, Mycenae's hunch had been spot on. It was likely that everything left within the Dungeon was gathered at the fountain. This was probably the true reward given to the hero, who overcame all the tests.

They had used a rotten method to pass the test, but they had passed it. It was time for them to see the fruit of their ordeal, which had lasted for a year.

"The fountain was put there to fool us. The entrance is below it. The reward is also placed underneath it."

"There is something below? Shouldn't there only be the ground below?"

"Where do you think the water is coming from?"

Artpe smirked as he gave instructions to Maetel.

"Let's destroy the fountain."

"Yes!"

Maetel was confident only when it came to destroying stuff. She gave an energetic reply as she raised her newly acquired long sword. She focused her Mana within it.

Her level was above 150, so she possessed a sufficient pool of Mana within her. She didn't need to be linked with Artpe.

"Wow. I can feel my Mana gathering at the tip of my sword."

"Ready, aim..... Fire!"

"Eh-eet!"

The long sword was black, but when she gathered her Mana into the sword, it let out a bright golden light. It was the same color as Maetel's hair.

The energy shot out from the tip of the sword, and it flew in a straight line towards the fountain. The energy impacted on the fountain, and it was destroyed easily. A hidden hallway was

revealed.

They hadn't expected another underground space, but it was a large space where people could reside. The clear underground water encompassed and flowed around the space. A clean and refined stone surface covered the hallway.

There was a single altar placed in the middle.

".....Artpe, what is that?"

Maetel found two books placed on something that looked to be an altar.

One book had a red leather cover, and the other one had a blue leather cover. Of course, Artpe immediately knew the identity of the books when he saw them.

"Those are Skill Books..... Ha."

It wasn't just normal Skill Books. These were Unique Skill Books that could be learned only by 'Heroes'.

When he realized the implications of this, Artpe felt electrified. He had kept his expectations in check, but this Dungeon had really been made for a hero. At that moment, what he thought was a coincidence turned into destiny!

Chapter 21 – Our Sunbae-nim Did This? (5)

From time immemorial, the red color signified a warrior, and the blue color signified a magician. Of course, the population of magicians was very small compared to the warriors. This was why it was clear, who this was prepared for.

“Normally, Heroes are are able to learn both. They possess the power of a warrior and the power of a magician.”

“But I can’t use magic!”

“I already know that fact, so you don’t have to repeat it.”

During their spare time, he had tried to teach her the basics of magic. However, all his attempts had failed.

She was dumb. She was so obviously dumb that no one would be able to say otherwise. If one gave her a sword, she was a genius, who could easily take down monsters that were much higher in level than her. At the same time, she was an idiot, who couldn’t figure out a simple math problem. It was said that the heavens was fair in its dealings. This truth was never felt so keenly as when he looked at Maetel.

“That is why you have to learn how to do magic.”

“We can split them between us in a friendly way!”

Maetel let out a pure laugh. This really wasn’t something that should be laughed at. Artpe kept sighing as they ran down towards the plaza that existed below the fountain.

When they touched the floor, the entrance made by Maetel closed as a ceiling slid into place.

“Would you look at this.....?”

This felt weird. Artpe narrowed his eyes as he looked at his surrounding. Fortunately, they were in a large space. A waterway had been created, so there was a constant stream of fresh water

available. It was so clear that they would be able to drink it straight out of the waterway. They also wouldn't have to worry about running out of air.

However, there were no exits here.

“Basically, the Dungeon hasn't ended yet....?”

Now that he thought about it, he had killed the Death Knight, who had been the last monster connected to the Record Link. They had received EXP from it, yet the energy of the Record Link still remained in this place. He was sure there weren't any monsters left. However, it seemed a test remained. Maybe, the act of learning the Skills was a form of test.

“There is something written here, Artpe.”

Maetel had walked towards the altar before Artpe, and she was pointing at a section of the altar.

“Huh. You are right.”

Artpe headed towards the altar, and he could see hard characters carved into it. If he was to be precise, this was the language of the Ancient Empire. No one in this world would have an easy time reading it. However, Artpe was an exception since he possessed the Read All Creation ability.

“I congratulate you for overcoming the trials, beginner hero. Anyone who was able to find this place would know about me, so I won't talk about myself.’..... Even this introduction is all wrong.”

“He must have been a really famous person.”

“Fame erodes away over time. He was foolish for not knowing this.”

Artpe read those arrogant words. He sneered at the desire for fame that was unique to humans. Maetel didn't know about his slimy inner thoughts, so she continued to laugh, while saying Artpe was smart.

Of course, Artpe didn't care about learning about the name of the hero. He had a general idea as to who it was. The man boldly wrote about beginner heroes. He was probably a former hero from a generation or several generations ago.

Artpe didn't know who the previous generation's hero was. He didn't even know the name of the previous generation's Demon King. He just knew that the language of the Ancient Empire was being used here, so at the very least, this Dungeon was several hundred years old.

“I had faith that a hero would one day be born again in this land. I also believed that this hero would come looking for my tomb. However, I cannot give you the secrets of the hero just because you are a junior, who respects your sunbae. This is why I put forth the Record Link to test you. Please forgive me.”

“It seems this person was born around here too.”

“Yes and he was spectacularly forgotten by everyone.”

By its outside appearance, how could this be the grave of a previous hero? No one in his past life knew about this truth! At this point, it was a wonder as to how the information became so perfectly hidden!

Still, it was believable when he thought more on it. There was a high probability that Maetel was a descendant of this previous hero. It was normal for the family of heroes to have one or two secrets.

“I believe any hero that was able to safely reach this point will be able to complete the next task. I trust you, and I will not be suspicious of you. I have placed these presents here for my junior. All you have experienced to reach this point were lessons. I placed a mixture of skill and spell that is tied to the Record Link. You should learn it before you leave.”

The words ended there. Artpe was surprised by this fact. He

thought the man would continue to boast by writing around 10,000 words, but he had ended it more cleanly than Artpe had expected.

“Well, let me see.....”

After reading all the words, Artpe’s gaze once again headed towards the altar with the books placed on top of it. One was a spell book and the other one was a skill book. He had wondered why he couldn’t read the content of the books with his Read All Creation ability. The flow of the Record Link was connected to the books.

He had never expected to see skills that were completed using the influence of magic. In his past life as one of the Four Heavenly Kings, he had never heard of such a thing.

Maybe it was a matter of course since no one in his past life had discovered this place. He had always believed that Record Link was full of side effect, so he never thought about such unimaginable benefits it could bring.

‘The Record Link wasn’t made with the intent of just tormenting us..’

Artpe was enlightened. Of course, the anger at the sunbae, who had driven Maetel and him to the brink of death, still remained!

“This sunbae really cared about his juniors!”

“I think so, too. Now let us worry about what is to come.”

“Huh?”

He was now sure of the sunbae hero’s intent. However, Artpe’s personality wouldn’t let him cross a stone bridge when he could destroy and build a steel bridge. He used his Read All Creation ability to carefully inspect his surrounding.

“Hmmmm.....”

“What is it, Artpe?”

“It’s nothing. It just feels a little bit off to me. However, I don’t

see anything abnormal.”

He was sure there were no additional traps here. He was only slightly worried about the fact that all the Mana within the Dungeon was being funneled into the altar..... Since they had already reached this point, they couldn't make additional preparations. There was nothing they could do that would make them more prepared for what was to come.

If so, it was time to move forward. It didn't matter what was waiting for them. It was time to act.

“I'm ready, Artpe.”

“Me too.Alright. Now.”

“Yes!”

Artpe and Maetel exchanged glances. They stepped forward at the same time, and they reached out their hands towards their respective book. At that moment, they felt a pressure as if their entire body was being sucked towards the book. Their hands stuck to the books.

“Koohk!?”

“Endure it. If we falter here, the Record Link will run out of control!”

All the Mana within the Dungeon was flowing towards the two books placed on top of the altar. All the records that had mounted for the past year was being split into two. It flowed into the two books using the Record Link, and after it finished its mission, it dissipated.

“Hoo.... Ha.”

“Ooh-ahhhhhh. I'm tired. This is too difficult.”

“Endure it!”

All the tasks completed by Artpe and Maetel was influenced by the effect of overwhelming Mana, and it was formed into a skill

and a spell. Each appeared in front of their respective owners. However, Artpe's face crumpled when the new magic spell established itself within his brain.

‘This is…….’

When he entered this Dungeon, he had accomplished his tasks by using Mana. What he did was more of a magic manipulation rather than using a magic spell. Still, he never expected a strange magic that contradicted the root theories of magic and Mana to come into being!

If he learned to use it properly, he thought it could be something incredible. However, this was a magic spell unbefitting a magician! It was questionable as to whether he should actually call this a magic spell!

“Ssssp. Since this is a Unique Magic for heroes, I have no choice but to learn it.... Ooh-ahhhhhhhhh!”

At that moment, a big event occurred. What would happen if the Mana maintaining the Dungeon was split and sent into the books on the altar? Of course, the Dungeon would collapse! Artpe had been worrying about such a situation !

“I knew something like this would happen! Shit! That bugger of a sunbae!”

An advanced concept of magical circuitry was being impressed upon his body. However, he didn't even have the chance to be happy about it. He had to learn the skill as soon as possible, so he could escape this Dungeon!

Artpe grinded his teeth as he looked towards Maetel. In terms of battle skills, she possessed a god-given talent. If it's Maetel, she should be learning the skill at a faster rate than him....

“Ughh.”

“Hey you foooooooooooooool!”

Maetel had her head down as if she was perfectly powerless. He never expected her to fail at acquiring the skill! The timing of this was too perfect. This was like a bad joke! He wished she would do this at a later time when they could afford to do so!

Artpe gritted his teeth as he raised his hand. The blue leather bound book had already done its part, so it was completely gone now. He would be able to use the magic at any time.

He could use it right now.

“Mana String!”

Others wouldn’t be able to see it, but strings of black mana extended out from his five fingers. Up until now, Artpe had directly manipulated Mana to solve problems in the Dungeon. The reason being he had only a single spell in his arsenal. It seemed the Unique magic spell was fixed into taking on a similar form!

“Koohp. Break it all!”

Of course, Artpe would have been very disappointed if that was all there was to it. However, the Mana String he was using was undeniably a spell. It was a miracle that started out as Mana, but it was shaped into becoming a spell. Unlike the threads he manipulated before, the Mana String could interact with magical energy. Moreover, it was very high in physical power as it was able to affect nature.

This was why the five strands of Mana String was able to stop the Dungeon’s ceiling from collapsing, and falling on top of their heads.

“Artpe is incredible! You are too strong!”

“If you have the time to be impressed by me, you should learn the Skill!”

“But this is too hard.... Ughhh.”

“Hey you foooooooooooooool!”

It didn't matter if Artpe's mana reserve was enormous. It was impossible to prop up the Dungeon's collapsing ceiling indefinitely! Artpe screamed as he diligently controlled the Mana Strings. Maetel clung desperately to the skill book.

“Hurry, Maetel!”

“Ooooooooooh, ughhhhhh.....!”

The black Mana Strings boasted an overwhelmingly more powerful destructive force compared to the ones that controlled the shield with the Slow Down curse. Moreover, there were five of them!

The five long strands of black Mana Strings started to spin violently, and it was grinding up the entire Dungeon. Artpe was fighting desperately. He had activated the Hyper Rubbing. It was such an overpowering sight that it made one wonder if he was really fighting for his life.

“My Mana consumption is that much higher! Hurry up and succeed before it is too late, Maetel! I'll do anything you want if you succeed! Please hurry up!”

“Anything!? Ah, I did it! I learned it! Hurray!”

“You are really honest about your desires!”

The red leather bound book was finally gone! By the look of Maetel's bright eyes, it seemed she had learned the skill. He was puzzled as to why a genius of martial arts like Maetel had struggled to learn the skill. He wondered what it was. However, Artpe didn't have the time to ask such questions!

“Artpe! The altar!”

“I know. Hurry up and take my hand!”

It seemed the disappearance of the two books was a trigger. The altar kept spinning as it lowered into the ground. The flow of water that had been swirling around the space started to gather

itself towards the space vacated by the altar. The water was being sucked into it.

After he checked what was going on, he quickly grabbed Maetel's hand. He used his other hand to destroy the rocks that were falling towards them. They threw themselves into the portal where the water was exiting. There must be a path leading outside!

“Artpe, I don't think this tunnel is intact.....”

“Of course. There isn't much Mana left. That bastard of a sunbae was good at handling spells, but he was terrible at preserving and distributing Mana. That damn....!”

Fortunately, they could see a faint light at the end of the passageway. Artpe spat out all kinds of swear words as water splashed every time they took a step. They moved quickly.

It was around this time when Maetel was finally free from the aftereffect of acquiring the skill. She bit her lips as she tugged at his hand, and she carried him on her back.

“Record Divide!”

“What the hell. What does that skill with the slightly cool name do..... Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

Maetel started running faster. It was as if she was about to evaporate the water on the floor with her blazing speed. She did so in the nick of time, since the passageway started to collapse. An incredible amount of water was falling towards them!

“Eee-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Artpe was having a hard time seeing his surrounding, so he desperate extended his Mana Strings. He dispersed the water and the falling rock fragments that were falling towards their heads.

“Hurrerrrrrrrry up, Maetel!”

“We are almost there! I can see the exit, Artpe!”

The light was getting closer. However, Artpe's Mana was also

bottoming out! They had only a little ways to go. Were they going to be buried like this? It was an end befitting the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings, but Maetel was also here with him!

“I’ll give you my Mana, Artpe!”

“..... Uh? Do you even have Mana to spare.... Uh?”

Mana started flowing into him from Maetel. Artpe hadn’t used his Link magic. At that moment, Artpe was taken aback, but he soon came to an understanding.

“You said Record Drive. You....”

“The skill has a similar effect as Artpe’s magic! It has a wider range of use.... Anyways, hurry!”

Maetel didn’t have to urge him on. He was already using his spell. All the Mana received from her was put straight into the Mana Strings.

Before Artpe and Maetel’s heads could be bashed open, the chunks of rocks were grinded away in an instant. They threw themselves towards the light right before they reached the end of the passageway.

“Ooh-wahhhhhhhh,, Artpe-ehhhhhhhhhhhh!”

“Yes! This is it!”

He could hear the sound of water. Water was everywhere. Artpe let out a refreshing smile as he shouted out his words.

“It’s a waterfall! Fuuuuuuuuuuuuuuck!”

This was how the heroes were successful in escaping their very first Dungeon. The two heroes were 13 years old, and they were beings that defied all the records and history of the continent. This was the moment when the strongest little hero duo stepped out into the world.

Chapter 22 – Yesterday's Enemy (1)

The two heroes enjoyed a fun journey as they rode down the rough waters before they plummeted down the waterfall. They fell down an unknown distance towards the bottom of the ravine, and they were barely able to pick themselves out of the water.

His entire body ached, and his stomach was writhing. There was a long abrasive injury on his back, and his entire body was soaked. It was the worst feeling. He never wanted to experience it again.

“Ooh-ehhhhhk. Kol-ruhk, kol-ruhk.”

Artpe was making a bizarre sound as he threw up water. The sound was horrible enough to cool even a thousand year love. However, Maetel stood next to Artpe, and her expression remained normal. She looked worried as she patted Artpe's back.

“Are you ok, Artpe?”

“I'm not ok! Unlike you, I can't maintain balance while being swept away by the waterfall!”

“Why not? After I realized what was happening, I just had to wiggle my body a little bit.....”

At that moment, Artpe didn't find himself to be endearing, since he was having malicious thoughts towards Maetel. The feeling was so intense that it made him wonder if he could have won miraculous battles as one of the Four Heavenly Kings if he had been full of malice like this!

“I wish I was hurting instead of Artpe.....”

However, he was confronted with the sincerely worried face of Maetel, so such feelings melted away. Artpe became needlessly embarrassed, so he turned his gaze away from her as he replied in a small voice.

“It's nothing. It doesn't hurt that much, so it's fine.”

“Really? What a relief.”

Artpe had worried his belongings might have been lost, while he was being swept away by the waterfall. He checked his belongings, and everything was still there. He still had the two money pouches and the black egg.

Maetel still had the potion pouch within her armor, and she had held on tightly to her bastard sword and longsword. She was slowly becoming acclimatized to the fact that there were some things that were more important than one’s life as an adventurer.

It was also a fact that the two heroes were equally soaked. To make things worse, it was closer to winter than fall. The chilly winds were lowering their body temperature.

“Should I make a fire?”

“Yes, I’m cold.”

Maetel had a shy smile on her face as she nodded her head. Artpe looked up at the violet sky. It was slowly getting darker. A year had passed, so he wondered if it was possible that the soldiers of the kingdom was still searching for them near here.

“Mmm. Even if they are still searching for us, It doesn’t matter anymore.”

Even if one discounted their levels, the skills they possessed were formidable. They would be able to face down even a level 200 being possessing a high rank Class. There was also no way anyone above that level would be looking for them. They had better things to do.

“Here.”

“Wow!”

Artpe extended several strands of Mana String, and he cut down a nearby tree. His actions were so natural that Maetel started clapping. However, Artpe’s performance was just starting.

He created edges on the five black Mana Strings, and he rotated them to cut the tree into small pieces. He only moved a small portion of the wood pile. As a finishing touch, Artpe used Hyper Rubbing to cause intense friction amongst the wood. It caused it to ignite.

It burst into flame. The whole process took only 25 seconds.

“As expected, Artpe is amazing!”

“If I had a fire magic spell, I could do this in two seconds.....”

He now had a lot of money, so he wondered if he should have bought simple magic spells when he had the chance. Artpe thought about visiting the Tower of Mages in the future as he basked in the fire. Maetel stuck close to him, and she started rubbing her cheek against his cheek.

He was now used to this level of skinship, so Artpe could only let out small sighs. On the other hand, Maetel had a secret smile of triumph on her face.

“Hooo. This is comfortable and great The fact that we aren’t doing anything is pretty good, Artpe.”

“I don’t want you to get infatuated with that feeling. You have to be careful or else you won’t want to do anything else later. The moment you think that work is a losing proposition, your life is at an end.”

In his life as a demon, he had seen those, who hit the jackpot through creating a book or a related item.... There were those, who dreamed about not working their entire lives by living off the royalties. However, these people failed to pull it off, because they were lacking in experience and common sense.

“Eh-ee. It is good to do something like this occasionally. If we do it every day, it won’t be as good!”

“....sometimes you say smart things.”

The two small heroes rested quietly against each other.

It had been a long time since they were able to spend such carefree time. They had been continuously tormented by the internal agents of the Dungeon. Their current situation was tranquil and peaceful.

He didn't feel the need to speak. The sounds of the water flowing in the ravine and the crackling sound of the wood burning drowned out the silence.

When a little bit of time had passed, Maetel opened her mouth to ask a question.

“.....Artpe, what are we going to do from now on?”

“What do you want to do?”

“I want to become stronger. I want to help the unfortunate. Moreover, Artpe and I.....”

“Yes, you should stop there. Everything you said you'll be able to do to your heart's content.”

“Really!?”

Maetel's eyes had an odd shine to it. He was sure she had misunderstood something again. It was a hassle to set her straight, so he just kept his mouth shut. However, at that moment, a loud sound could be heard without any warning.

[Crown Prince.... Kill....!]

[Knights.... Your highness.....]

The sound of weapons hitting each other could be heard, and he felt the surrounding Mana being consumed to activate a magic spell. Then there was a stern voice and a desperate voice mixed in with those sounds. It was a scenario that might occur at the beginning of a novel about a knight. It was such a formulaic pattern!

When Artpe assessed the commotion, his face crumpled as he

mumbled to himself.

“Shit. An incident immediately occurred when you said something unnecessary. I thought I would be able to rest for at least two pages more.”

“Do you think I have some ability I don’t know about!?”

“No, I think this is just part of our karma.”

At that moment, a fight was going on somewhere close by. If Artpe and Maetel hadn’t heard it, it wouldn’t be a problem. However, once they heard the sound of the fight, Artpe knew they will get involved one way or another.

“Why?”

“This is how the world works.”

He wanted to say she was always like that in his previous life. However, he pushed down on those words firmly.

Yes, this was the destiny of a hero. It was strange, but wherever the hero went, an incident that might or might not occur in a hundred years happened. The hero inevitably got sucked into the mess, and the hero becomes the main player of the crisis. The hero would solve the problem in a dashing manner, and his or her name value would increase!

Anyways, this wasn’t something that happened just once or twice. Wherever a hero went, the hero was always involved in something. There could be an awakening of a legendary ruin, a visitation by an Arch Mage, the awakening of an ancient monster or an assassination attempt of the royal family!

It made one wonder if a hero would die from stress even before he or she got a chance to fight the Demon King. The accidental events that occurred around heroes was frequent and annoying!

“I wonder if such tumult would happen in the first place if the hero hadn’t existed. Wherever the hero goes, the unrest follows

the hero. This is why we have to kill the god.”

It was such an incoherent explanation. It was like saying an apple farmer had to behead the king, because there was a good harvest. However, Maetel nodded her head in a serious manner.

“I’ll kill a god for Artpe!”

“All right. How commendable.”

While Artpe and Maetel was having an idiotic conversation, the sound was getting closer. Screams were interspersed with the sounds of steel clashing. Maetel’s body flinched as if she was bothered by it. Artpe could easily read her inner thoughts, so he let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“We’ll eventually be swept up into whatever is going on over there, Maetel. If it bothers you, you should go on ahead. I’ll just stay here a little bit longer to warm my body.”

“Ah. No.”

Unexpectedly, Maetel shook her head from side to side.

“It does bother me and I want to rescue them, but.... The person I have to protect is Artpe. If I head out carelessly, Artpe might get drawn in. If you were hurt, I would feel like killing myself.”

“What.....?”

It was such an unexpected answer that Artpe was at a loss for words.

Maetel’s love for him was heavy. It was so heavy that he wondered if he’ll be crushed to death by it. On a side note, he was afraid his presence was having a weird influence on the pure hero.

If it was the hero from his past life, she would have immediately ran towards those in trouble, and she would have saved them. It wouldn’t matter if the place held traps or a strong foe.

However, she now had Artpe. She had someone she had to protect. This was why she was hesitating as she mulled over the

various consequences of her actions.

Of course, he couldn't blame her for it. Most people avoided getting involved in another's trouble. They protected what was important to them. Artpe was merely a former member of the Four Heavenly Kings, so he was a bit happy to find out that Maetel treasured him so much.

Still, he felt as if something was off.

'When I awoke as a human boy, I surmised that I would become the biggest variable that would cause the biggest change between my past life and this current life.... Yes, I was right. I'm the biggest variable. She's suppose to be the brightest beacon of light, yet this variable was able to bring her down to the level of a regular human....'

He suddenly felt fear, but he didn't show it. He calmly organized the situation inside his head. He calmly spoke towards the blond-haired girl, who was looking at him.

"That sounds idiotic. We'll become involved anyways. That is why you should just do whatever you feel like doing."

"I want to be by Artpe's side.....forever."

"....yes. All right."

It felt as if he had received an excessively heavy confession of love, but he dismissed it as him imagining things. Artpe let out a big sigh as he got up.

"Ah. Artpe?"

"Hmmpf."

He had made the fire, because he wanted to create a suitable atmosphere. However, he just need a small amount of Mana to dry their clothes. He emitted a small amount of Mana to try his underwear and robe. Then he extended his hand to make her body moisture-less.

“Since our clothes are dry now, let’s go. If I’m going, will you go?”

“.....yes!”

The two heroes kept talking in a manner unfitting heroes, yet they were finally able to take on work that heroes would undertake. A hero was a violent force that butted into other’s fights. The hero attempted to solve problems in a manner to their liking. Heroes were the ultimate busybody. This was what a hero was!

“Since we are about to intrude on someone else’s business, I’ll tell you about the basic stance we’ll take.”

“Yes!”

Artpe ran through the forest with Maetel as he spoke to her. Artpe’s stamina was very poor compared to Maetel. However, he had gone past level 140, so he had enough physical prowess to overpower most mercenaries. He wasn’t just a simple magician. He possessed the Hero Class and it had influence on him.

“The most difficult part is deciding, which side is the aggressor. We have no idea about the circumstances behind the fight. We have no idea who is good and who is bad. This kind of stuff isn’t as clear cut as one would like it to be.”

“Ooh-mmmm. This is too difficult.”

“Well, let’s say we decided which person we want to kill.”

“Heeeek!”

Up until now, she had only slaughtered monsters. Maetel freaked out at the idea of killing a human. As expected, she was immature regarding this type of stuff. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he continued his explanation.

“What if we find out later that we killed the good guys? What if we helped the bad guys? There are times when such a thing

occurs.”

“You can’t kill good people!”

“However, there could be misunderstandings. The good guys might think we are the bad guys too, and they might fight us.”

“No way.....”

Unshed tears glistened in the innocent hero’s eyes. She was confronted with an explanation that couldn’t be accepted by the simplistic values she possessed. This was why her mind was in a state of confusion.

Truthfully, Maetel was incredibly cute right now. How could she be so righteous and innocent! Every time he cause a black stain on her pure white heart it was the sweetest.... Crap. A bad habit he picked up during his days as the Four Heavenly King had almost appeared. Artpe calmed himself as he continued to speak his words.

“That is why our standard of judgment can’t be absolute good or evil.”

“Huh.....?”

“No one can determine what is absolutely good or evil. This is the province of the gods. This isn’t something dem.... This isn’t something should be decided by humans. If we make such judgments, it would be a form of arrogance and delusion.”

“Huuuuuuuh.....?”

They were getting closer to the commotion. This was why Artpe had to make this simple. He had to speak with a firm voice, so she would never forget it.

“This is why you should think of anyone that hates you as being evil.”

“.....”

It was a way of thinking more befitting a Demon King than a

hero.

“If someone tries to kill you, harm you, use you or have indecent desires.... They are all evil. You put yourself on the side of the good, and the others on the side of evil.”

“However, Artpe, you just said we shouldn’t decide what is good or evil.....”

“We aren’t determining absolute good and evil. It is a relative form of good and evil. You accept that you won’t always be right, then you do what you want.”

It was such an absurd, ridiculous and fraudulent way of thinking. Even if Maetel was young and naive, she knew Artpe’s words were wrong. A single slip would make one fall into the pit of evil. It was an absurdly selfish and arrogant way of thinking.

However, he had lived with such a philosophy as a demon for several hundred years. He had been the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings, and he always suffered under irrational violence. This was why he had developed such a mindset.

Nevertheless.....

“Artpe....”

Maetel raised her still shaking eyes to look at Artpe. She knew they had entered into the site of the fight, yet she still asked the question.

“How do you judge me, Artpe?”

“You dummy. You don’t even have to ask me that question. ”

Artpe lifted the corner of his mouth. He laughed as he made a statement.

“You are ‘always’ in the category of absolute good for me, hero-nim.”

“.....all right, Artpe.”

Maetel firmly nodded her head. Across the thicket, weapons were clashing noisily. She answered him as she threw herself towards the site of the battle.

“Then I’ll do whatever what I want to do!”

Chapter 23 – Yesterday's Enemy (2)

There was an open space on the other side of the brush. Blood and metal shavings were flying into the surrounding. In a blink of an eye, a person's life was lost.

There was group trying to protect someone, and the other group was trying to erase someone. All kinds of ambitions were overflowing from them, and the humans were being consumed by it.

“Kill the crown prince! We have to kill that bastard to end all of this!”

“Protect him! We have to protect him!”

Their words made it very easy to identify them! If the world was full of people like them, there would be no need for mind reading magic!

“Uht!?”

“Aht!”

When Artpe and Maetel arrived at the clearing, every participant of the battle noticed their arrival.

One group looked back at them with hope, and the other group looked on with annoyance. However, when they confirmed the identity of the new arrivals, the expressions on both sides crumpled.

“They are children....!”

“Tsk. The number of people we have to take care of increased.”

At this point, Artpe had finished dividing them into enemies and allies. He turned to look at Maetel. His expression was like that of a tutor expecting a child to give the right answer.

Her face was full of questions.

“Artpe.”

He knew it was going to be like this. Artpe let out a sigh as he gave her an explanation.

“What did I tell you? You kill those who wants to kill you.”

“Yes!”

“Here.”

Artpe raised his hand, and he pointed towards one group. This particular group was wearing black clothes over their body. It was as if they had shopped from the same cloth store. The crown prince was probably amongst the group fighting a defensive battle. The ones in black had said, ‘The number of people we have to take care of increased.’

“They said they want to take care of us, right?”

“Ah. I see!”

“Then let me pose you a problem. When they said they wanted to take care of us, what were they referring to?”

“Mmmmm. They are going to send us away after giving us an explanation?”

“Wrong. The answer is they will send us to hell without giving us an explanation.”

“How dare they.....”

The two brats had appeared out of nowhere, and they were having a conversation as if they were doing a gag routine. The two groups had been in the midst of fighting for their lives, so the sight in front of them looked ridiculous. Everyone was looking at Artpe’s party in disbelief.

“Shouldn’t you be feeling fear? Or maybe you should start running away? Kids these days are too dumb.”

“Fay...number 3. You take care of them.”

“Yes.”

The black clad group continued attacking the defenders, and only a single one of them ran towards Maetel and Artpe. He used the most popular line within the book called ‘150 Lines Most Used by Villains.’

“Blame your bad luck!”

Artpe took a peek at Maetel. As expected, she was frozen like a statue.

“Maetel.”

“Ah. Ah-ooh.”

She wasn’t afraid of her enemy’s abilities. She was frightened of the truth that she was no longer fighting monsters. She had to face off against a human.

“Ah, Artpe.”

“Hoo.”

He didn’t blame her for acting foolishly in front of an enemy. She was a child, who possessed a tender heart, so this result was to be expected. This reaction was actually preferable. If Maetel had unhesitatingly charged forward to kill the man, Artpe would have been frightened.

Of course, Artpe assessed the situation, and he decided on what he would do.

“Get out of the way, Maetel.”

“Kyahk.”

He had pushed Maetel to the side as he stepped in front of her.

“You are a little brat, but it seems you think of yourself as a man? You plan on protecting the female!”

“Artpe!?”

Artpe made himself the target by stepping forward unarmed.

This move incited the enemy, and it put Maetel on alert. He was killing two birds with one stone.

The generic Villain 1 fell for his provocation. He headed towards Artpe with his sword raised. Maetel had been pushed to the side, and her eyes were wide open as she watched the sight in front of her.

The sharp blade of the enemy was heading towards Artpe, and it was getting bigger in her vision. There was a clear blue tint of Mana surrounding the blade! It was a powerful skill that couldn't be stopped with Artpe's unprotected body.

"I'll give you a clean death! Power Stri....khhhhhk!"

Villain 1 had swung his sword towards Artpe. When Maetel saw this, her eyes flipped over as she unsheathed her bastard sword from her waist. She did it with one hand. She wasn't thinking about anything. Her body reacted on instinct.

The Villain 1 was yet to pass level 100, so Maetel split him from the groin to the top of the head.

"Fay...lan....?"

"What the....."

Two weighty sound was heard when the body fell to the floor. At that moment, all sounds within the clearing ceased.

It didn't matter if someone was on the offensive end or the defensive end of the fight. All of them focused their gazes on the girl holding the bastard sword.

"....."

"Crazy... Right now... What did you....?"

Of course, the nearby people were surprised. However, Artpe didn't care about the background characters. Artpe only looked at Maetel.

The girl had killed someone for the first time. She hadn't done it

for herself. She had done it for someone else.

“He tried to kill Artpe.”

Maetel had seen what she had done, yet she mumbled to herself as if she couldn't believe it. She was gripping the sword so hard that her knuckles were white.

“We just came here... We came here for a look, yet you guys tried to kill Artpe.”

“That girl is dangerous. Everyone.....”

However, she didn't allow her enemies to talk amongst themselves. Maetel pointed the bastard sword towards the 'enemies' as she asked a question.

She didn't ask it towards her enemies. It was for Artpe.

“Artpe, you said I can do whatever I want to do?”

“I did.”

“.....all right.”

No more words were necessary.

In a flash, Maetel's hesitancy had disappeared.

“Dodge it. Block.....”

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

Maetel pushed off the ground as she ran forward. She swung her bastard sword laterally. Each of her opponents tried emitting Mana into their weapons or body parts. They were attempting to use a defensive or a counter skill. However, they were all dispatched with a single blow.

There were several high rank Class that were over level 100 present within the group. However, all the defensive technique were canceled by Maetel's basic active attack skill!

“I won't forgive you! I won't! You guys are all bad! That is what I decided!”

She wasn't using Berserk right now. In fact, she hadn't even activated her gauntlet's option yet either. It was quite simple. There was an amazing amount of talent gap between Maetel and the men.

“Koo-ahk!”

“Kah!”

“This is a nightmare. How can such a young child do this against elite knights....!”

The elite knights of the humans were in such a poor state. He now understood why the Demon King had moved at a leisurely pace. Artpe smirked when he realized that the strongest amongst them was barely level 120.

“Run away. There is no way.....”

“I won't let you run away!”

The number of black clad villains went from 20 to 17, 14, 10..... The number became five, and now there were only two of them.

“W...who sent you! Reveal yourselves!”

“We have to retreat. If we aren't able to notify the second party about the location of the crown prince...koo-ahk!”

Then there was one.

“I don't know who you guys are, but you will regret doing this someday.”

Then there were zero.

“Hoo.....”

“Right now... What the hell just happened?”

“All our pursuers are dead. I don't believe it.....”

After killing everyone, Maetel lightly flicked her bastard sword once to get rid of the blood. After she sheathed her sword, she turned to look at Artpe.

“Artpehhhhh~”

She had been beyond brave. She have been frighteningly decisive in her actions, but unlike before, her eyes were full of unshed tears now.

“Yes, yes. You did very well.”

He knew her heart would be in tumult right now. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he hugged her. She was crying, because she was afraid of her own self more so than anyone. It felt as if he could feel her feelings vividly through the hands holding her.

Once, he had been like her. His personality was unbecoming of a Demon. He had despaired, as he had hated himself more so than anyone over the years.

“Should I really be doing things like this? It feels like I did something very wrong.”

“No, you did well. Even if you were in the wrong, there will never come a day when you will realize that fact. That is why you don’t have to worry too much about it.”

“Artpe.....”

Artpe used a messed up oxymoron to console her as he stroked her head. The people, who had been watching the fight, was taken aback. Their round eyes were full of shock. They looked like they wanted to ask what kind of third rate skit this was.

There was an armored woman holding a steel sword amongst the group. She spoke to Artpe as she expressed a bit of wariness towards him.

“Thank you very much for helping us. However, it would be best if you don’t get involved with us....”

“Yes. All right.”

“What!?”

She hadn’t even started giving him a proper explanation! The

woman was taken aback. As expected of the owner of the Read All Creation ability, he was the best in the world at reading a situation. Artpe continued to stroke the head of the sniffing Maetel as he spoke to the woman.

“We saw nothing here. I don’t care about what happened here. We were passing by, and we just killed couple monsters. That should be fine, right?”

“What?”

The woman was surprised when he gave her the exact answer she had wanted to hear. Artpe snorted when he saw this, then he turned around.

“Let’s go, Maetel.”

“Is it really alright to just leave like this, Artpe? We can just go? ”

“We did as you wished by helping them, and this is the result. They don’t want us to get involved with them. Then our business with them is at an end. We can go do what we want to do.”

“.....sniff. All right.”

Maetel had accepted his answer, so he was about to head back to the warm fire. He was consoling Maetel as he walked away when it occurred.

Someone yelled towards them from the other party.

“Stop!”

It was the voice of a young man. Artpe didn’t stop.

“I told you to stop! This is the order of the crown prince!”

“You hid like a mouse during the fight, so I thought you were some poor mute. I see now that you are quite loud.”

“Kook....!”

The crown prince shut his mouth at Artpe’s sharp retort.

At times, truth was more cruel than anything else. Moreover, he

had just seen a girl that was the same age as him fight, and he couldn't hold a candle against her. This was why his pride was deeply hurt.

“Y...you are being rude! As he had revealed, he is the next in line to ascend to the throne of the Diaz Kingdom.....”

“Didn't I say I saw nothing? Are you guys idiots?”

“Oohk....”

He could tolerate foolish behaviors only up to a certain point. He had been trying to part ways with them as he pretended he didn't know what was going on, yet they revealed themselves anyways. They even tried to use an authority they no longer possessed in an attempt to stop Artpe and Maetel!

Artpe let out a sigh as he started walking once again....

“Help me!”

“Your highness!”

“The kingdom is in turmoil, because of the rebels! I must go back to to the place someday, and I must get my revenge for my father the king. I have to regain my throne. If I want to do so, I need strong people like you!”

The boy was pretty straightforward, and he showed some promise!? Still, this didn't mean Artpe had stopped walking.

“You should go look for help somewhere else. Let's go, Maetel.”

“Yes. I hate the palace!”

She firmly believed that the palace had tasteless food. This was why the palace was a place where she would never get close to! Maetel grabbed the sleeve of Artpe's robe, and she obediently followed behind him.

“W...wait a moment!”

The boy finally made his appearance as he pushed past his

protectors! He looked to be of similar age as Artpe and Maetel. He was a strikingly good-looking boy.

He yelled loudly towards Artpe and Maetel. He stared at Maetel, who had displayed overwhelming martial prowess.

“If you guys are the subjects of this land, you should help the one that would become the ruler of this land in the future....! I do not lie. I will give both of you a big reward in the future! I swear it!”

He wanted to escape this pattern of events. Artpe let out a sigh. He turned around as he gave an answer.

“Then give me half of the world.”

“Mmm!? T...that is....”

At Artpe's out of the blue request, the crown prince's eyes narrowed. He was only a crown prince of a kingdom, and he was on the run. How could he offer half of the world!

Artpe clicked his tongue..

“At a minimum, the Demon King offers this deal to the hero. You should come back after reading a book called, ‘How to Propose an Offer that Can't be Turned Down.’”

This was a very sweet opportunity. However, Maetel just assumed Artpe didn't want to get involved in something annoying. She was somewhat correct, but it wasn't the whole truth. Artpe didn't have that bad of a personality.

Except....

‘How could I forget about him? That bastard was originally the crown prince of the Diaz Kingdom.....’

In his past life, he had been the enemy of the hero. The hero's heart was too soft, so she had been unable to kill Artpe. This was why the thief ruthlessly plunged his dagger into Artpe's heart to deal the killing blow.

“Why are you refusing to even hear me out! If you succeed in this

task, I said I would give you a very generous reward! Moreover, the one with the ability is the girl, so why do you keep answering for her!”

The crown prince was shouting at Artpe with all his might. Artpe saw the face of the thief superimpose over the face of this boy.

“Ah, I just don’t want to do it. I don’t like you! I’m not doing it!”

“Why not!”

[Silpennon Le Diaz]

[Crown Prince]

[Level – 7]

[Steal Lv1]

[Silent Steps Lv2]

Yes, this bastard was that bastard.

A crown prince of a country grew up to be a thief.

Chapter 24 – Yesterday's Enemy (3)

In his past life, the hero had been born within the Diaz Kingdom. When the hero turned 12 years old, she was dragged straight into the palace. This was the biggest mistake that had occurred in the past hero's life.

The palace followed a Hero Support Manual that was created several hundred years ago. While she was reared with the utmost care, the hero's first party member was added during this time. He was none other than this country's crown prince Silpennon Le Diaz. He was a thief.

‘Of course, it isn't my business as to why Silpennon had turned down his seat as the crown prince to join the hero's party..... No, I get it now.’

It was true that Silpennon was directing his words towards Artpe, but his eyes remained planted on Maetel. His cheeks were red. It seemed he had fallen for her on first sight.

It was understandable. In her past life, Maetel could have easily ruined couple kingdoms with her beauty. She was only thirteen years old right now, but her budding beauty could be seen even now. This was why it wasn't far-fetched to think that the crown prince had fallen for her.

Still, Silpennon had witnessed Maetel shed blood with his two eyes. It was a bit baffling that he was able to show such pure ardor towards her.

“I don't want your answer. I want to hear it from the girl!”

Silpennon browbeat Artpe as he turned his intense gaze towards Maetel. Artpe shrugged his shoulders, and he lightly tapped Maetel's shoulder.

“....if you put it that way, I have no choice. You do whatever you want, Maetel.”

“Huh?”

Maetel's tears hadn't stopped yet, but she was released from Artpe's embrace. She faced the crown prince. The crown prince looked on with pity when he saw her puffy eyes.

“You poor thing..... You are a child with a very tender heart. However, you don't have to be worried. The people you killed right now are rebels. They are traitors to this country, so you don't have to be wounded by their deaths.....”

“I hate the palace! I'm not going!”

Silpennon's attempt at consoling her failed miserably. Maetel cut him off as she rejected him. She returned to the arms of Artpe. She was as resolute as Artpe.

“What the.....”

Silpennon was turned down in no uncertain term, so he froze in place. One of the knights protecting Silpennon inadvertently started breaking out in laughter. The other knights reigned him in.

Silpennon came to his senses under the impetus of the laughter. He had never been turned down so firmly in his life. His pride took a big hit, and he started talking incoherently.

“W...why not.... I promise to give you a lot of things! If you help me, I... Y...yes. What is your name? Which family are you from? If you have to travel around with such a terrible servant, it seems to indicate that you are unfortunately not from a suitable family. However, when we return to the palace, I'll use all the power at my disposal to elevate you to a suitable position....”

“....did you just insult Artpe right now?”

She didn't like something Silpennon had said. Maetel remained in Artpe's embrace, but she extracted her face to glare at Silpennon. Silpennon realized he had stepped on a mine, so his face turned pale.

“Ah. I...I didn't mean it like that....”

“I just told you! Artpe isn't terrible, and he isn't my servant!”

“H...he isn't your servant!?”

“You are really terrible!”

It really was a sight that couldn't be seen without shedding some tears. It seemed Artpe wasn't the only one having such thoughts. The female knight, who had initiated a conversation with Artpe, carefully spoke to Silpennon.

“Your highness. Unfortunately, we might have to give up on the idea of them helping us. They have already saved your highness' life once. You should be thankful, yet you are trying to detain them against their will. This isn't unbefitting of your station, your highness. You possess the great bloodline of Diaz.”

“Koo-oohk.... So I have no choice, but to let the girl go!”

“Your highness.....”

They were playing their parts well. They continued to act as if they were still in charge of a kingdom. If so, they could do as they wished by themselves.

“She doesn't want to do it. Are we done here? We're going.”

“Hmmp!”

Artpe let out a sigh as he turned away from them. As if she was worried about being left behind, she matched his footsteps. At that moment, she was very cute.

However....

“Please stop.....”

Silpennon called after them again. His voice drooped like a wet rag. Artpe didn't hide his annoyance as he turned around. However, his eyes opened slightly wider when he saw what was in Silpennon's hand.

“Please take this.”

“What the....”

It was Artpe’s turn to be surprised like an idiot.

Silpennon had held up a large jewel that was emitting a purple light from all its surface. Anyone, who knew the identity of the precious gemstone, would have reacted in a similar fashion. Artpe’s Read All Creation ability didn’t let him down. It immediately displayed the item’s info.

[Demite’s Gemstone]

[Magician]

[It is part of the Limite group, which is considered to be the one of the highest ranked ingredients for magic items. It is incredibly high in purity, and as time passed, it gained a Class of its own. It is a legendary gem that only appears a handful of times in either the human world or the demon world.

It hadn’t been refined yet, so the gemstone’s enormous power is still hidden. However, once it is refined, it will increase one’s Mana by a vast amount, and it would also develop random additional abilities. It will also develop a will of its own, so it will have the ability to help the owner finish one’s spell. However, it is so hard that it is almost impossible to refine it. This is the only flaw to the item.]

‘This is probably worth more than his entire kingdom!?’

He had run across an unexpected item at a place where he had never expected to find it. This was why Artpe almost became lost in himself. Silpennon spoke calmly in front of Artpe.

“Since I’ve incurred a debt to you, it is up to me to express my thanks. I am being chased, but I cannot neglect my duty. Take this, youth. I don’t know what it is, but it has been kept in our kingdom’s treasury for a very long time. I’m sure it is a precious gemstone. You should sell this, so your master... No. I want you to

use it to help the girl acquire equipment that would be of help to her.”

“Do you really know what this is....”

No, if he knew, he wouldn't have given it to Artpe no matter how great of a help they were to him. Artpe cleanly swallowed the shout of joy that was about to exit his mouth. He took the purple colored gemstone. In such a situation, it was one's duty to be quiet, and just take the item!

“Hmm. As expected of the crown prince, you've received a fantastic upbringing. Thank you.”

“Is that perhaps a compliment, Artpe!?”

The other knights were taken aback when they saw Silpennon hand over the Demite Gemstone. It seemed all the other knights weren't like the female knight, who convinced Silpennon to do the right thing. It seemed they didn't put much importance in duty and honor.

“Your highness, we took that before we ran away from the palace. I don't think you should give away such a precious treasure.....”

“It is too excessive. I can tell at a glance that they aren't highborn. We can't give our treasure just because they aided us with the sword once....”

“His highness has made his decision, so you should all shut up.”

Everyone shut their mouth when the female knight gave a fiery order. She was level 118. Since she had the highest level amongst the knights, he had wondered if she was the leader. He had guessed right.

Well, even if she was the leader, they were.... Artpe shrugged his shoulders, and he put away the Demite's Gemstone into the Dimensional Pouch.

The knights kept looking back at Artpe as if Silpennon's actions had left much to be desired. The female knight spoke in praise about the crown prince's upbringing. Silpennon tried to act cool on the outside, but the crown prince couldn't let go of the lingering attachment he had towards Maetel.

“Mmm.....”

Artpe hesitated as he looked at them.

He didn't like Silpennon, but this sentiment came from the fact that Silpennon had delivered the killing blow in his past life. However, the one in front of him showed some promise.

No, if he thought about it, Silpennon had carried out the dirty deed instead of the hero. He wasn't really that bad of a guy.

Every time he saw Silpennon he remembered the calm face of the bastard, who stuck a dagger into his heart in his past life. It annoyed him, but when he saw the Demite's Gemstone in his hand, any trauma he would have felt evaporated in moments.

‘All right. It feel like a waste to just send them off like this.’

This was why he decided to give Silpennon a bonus.

“Could you wait a little bit?”

“What? Are you perhaps going to help us.....”

“Do you have any paper?”

“Paper?”

The female knight tilted her head in confusion. She took out a piece of parchment from within her clothes. She handed it over to Artpe.

“All right.....”

He opened up the parchment, and he emitted a very small amount of Mana at the tip of his finger. Small smoke started to rise up as he wrote his letter. It was a trick that can be performed only

by those adept at controlling Mana. Everyone except Maetel flinched when they saw this.

“As expected, this youth isn’t normal either, your highness...”

“If he is her assistant.... At the very least, he should have that much skill if he wants to travel with her. He’s a magician.”

“Well, I’m done writing. Also....”

Artpe took out an envelope from his Dimensional Pouch. It contained a strange green powder. He folded the note, and he handed it to the female knight with the envelope containing the green powder. He gave her a light wink.

“It is only for your eyes.”

“W...what....”

The female knight’s face turned red. Silpennon and the knights focused their gazes on her. The female knight was flustered, but she quickly hid the items.

“A...are you trying to make fun of an adult!”

“I was sincere. It is only for your eyes.”

“Koohk.....”

Artpe was well aware of the fact that his appearance was quite pleasing. If not, a big fish like the leader of the thieves’ army Etna Carlyfate Mirecard wouldn’t have clung to him.

Of course, love didn’t develop just based on a person’s appearance. However, one’s appearance was the first impression one could give, and it was undeniable that it had an immense effect on various parts of the love that develops.

Silpennon was stunned as he looked up at her face.

“Leseti... Really?”

“Ah. No way, your highness! He’s just a young lad!”

“However, your face turned red.”

“It isn’t like that! Anyways, I have to check if the note and the powder is safe. I’ll keep it in my possession until then!”

“We’ll be leaving now. I hope you live long enough for us to meet again.”

Artpe chortled as he turned away. He had done all he could for them, so it was up to them now. The night was getting deep, so they should return to their own campfire to get ready for camping outside...

“Artpe.....”

Maetel’s eyes were murky like the eyes of a dead fish. She asked a question with a voice that was colder than winds blowing within the icy depths of hell.

“Does Artpe perhaps like old women....?”

“No. Nope. I promise you that isn’t the case.”

She had also fallen for the ruse!

Artpe let out a sigh as he flicked her forehead. He dragged her towards the campfire.

On the other side, the crown prince’s party stood in place for a moment. Everyone was looking towards one person. When the female knight became the focus of their attention, Leseti was flustered. She kept waving her arms.

“I...it isn’t like that! It isn’t, your highness! Anyways, we should ready our camp. Since we don’t know how long our pursuers will follow us, we can’t rest long.....”

“Yes, we should rest, and you should read the letter.”

“It is probably nothing!”

Leseti erased the traces of battle, and she led the crown prince’s party towards a suitable campsite. She ordered the knights to make a shelter, so Silpennon could rest first. When no one was looking, she secretly took out Artpe’s letter.

“That impertinent brat.....”

It seemed he had good eyes to be able to recognize a beauty like her. Leseti let out a self-satisfied smile as she lit a candle. His penmanship was so elegant that it was hard to believe a young man had written it. However, the letter was stuck to her eyes starting from the first word.

[All the other knights are traitors. It is up to you to protect the crown prince before he gets killed or kidnapped by them. They were probably waiting the right time to steal the jewel from the crown prince, but he gave it to me. They won't hesitate anymore. Ah. I've enclosed a poison within the folded envelope. You should use it. This makes us even.]

.....the content of the letter had gone in a completely different direction than what Leseti had expected. The letter still made her heart pound.

Chapter 25 – Yesterday's Enemy (4)

The fire made by Artpe was very warm. The two of them caught fishes from the ravine, and they cooked it over the fire. They used 3 silver worth of salt. Maetel hadn't had any fish for over a year, so she was surprised by the sudden and unexpected taste.

“Heeng. This is so tasty.....”

“If you eat when you are hungry, everything tastes great .”

There were still traces of tear left near Maetel's eyes. Still, she was briskly eating the fishes. She was even eating the bones. He couldn't help but smile. He started to eat his own portion of fishes as he spoke.

“You have worked hard, Maetel. It is true that the Dungeon was very hard, but as a result, we were able to significantly decrease our growth period. We'll be able to move with a little bit more time to spare. No, even if you don't like it, we'll move at a more leisurely pace. I'm really tired and exhausted.”

“Artpe.....”

“Say it.”

Maetel was still unable to calm her heart. She sniffed as she asked him a question.

“Are you really sure that you don't like older women?”

“.....”

Was she still worried about that!?

He was dumbfounded. He smirked as he shook his head from side to side.

“Didn't I tell you earlier? I gave her a little bit of a warning as recompense for the gem we received.”

“Are you really sure?”

“I’m really sure.”

“.....yes, I’ll believe you.”

It seemed her worry about Artpe looking at other women overshadowed her psychological uneasiness at killing humans. It seemed Artpe wouldn’t have to worry too much about her.

Artpe let out a sigh of relief, and he was about to clear away the trash. However, at that moment, Maetel spoke as if she just had an idea.

“I want to sleep next to Artpe.”

“You aren’t a child anymore.”

“I want to sleep with you. You said you’ll grant me any wish I want.”

Maetel’s voice was shaking slightly. When he heard it, Artpe realized he was under a misconception.

She wasn’t being unnecessarily clingy towards Artpe. Her mental state was uneasy. Moreover, she was still worried about the thought of Artpe leaving her.

“....all right. I did say that I’ll grant you a wish, so it can’t be helped.”

“Ya-ho!”

He took out a bedroll(5 silvers). It was a bit cramped for two people, but he was prepared to go through with it tonight.

He gathered some leaves on the ground, and he placed a cloth over it. Then he placed the bedroll on top before he lie within it. As if she was worried about Artpe going back on his words, she quickly got in. She had a satisfied expression on her face as she closed her eyes.

“Good night, Artpe.”

“It’s cramped and uncomfortable in here, so how can we sleep

well.... She is already asleep.”

“Ssss…….”

When Maetel was held by Artpe, it seemed all her worries were let go. She was breathing easily as she quickly fell into sleep. Artpe was dumbfounded by the sight, but in the end, he let out a bitter laugh as he moved to put her in a more comfortable position.

‘It feels like I’m raising a kid.’

In truth, it may not be too far from the truth. Maetel didn’t remember her past life, so she was just a young 13 year old girl. If Artpe added in his past life, he had lived for couple hundred years. He was a demon that was turned into a hero. Sometimes, he felt the disparity between the two lives keenly, and in those moments, he had a hard time breathing.

Still, Artpe liked being with Maetel. It was strange, but at times, he felt pleased and full.

It wasn’t just because she was a talent, who could free Artpe by defeating the Demon King. At this point, Artpe had no choice but to accept the fact. Maetel was fairly.... She was quite dear to him.

It was unfortunate that the innocent child was changing. She was being stained by his presence. However, he was thankful that this small child cherished him, and she wanted him around.

It was as if he had committed a sin. It felt as if he was slowly being buried under a soft marsh. It was as if he was melting away. He was afraid to struggle... It was that sweet.

‘Still, I shouldn’t pay too much attention to it. I can be complacent after we kill the Demon King..’

Yes, he had things to do right now.

Artpe was careful not to wake Maetel. He carefully snuck his hand out of the bedroll, and he activated his magic. The Hero’s Unique Spell called Mana String was activated in no time.

“Kook!?”

“We were found.....!”

The five strands of Mana Strings extended out into the surrounding. The Mana Strings let out a black light as they danced in the air. Red lines of blood bloomed underneath the dark night sky like flowers. Accompanying dull thudding sounds, human body parts started to fall to the ground.

“How!”

They had been sure that they had succeeded in their stealth mission. They paid for this belief with their lives. Of course, there were still a lot of them left. Artpe would extract a price from all of them.

Artpe looked at them with cool eyes, and he spoke with a voice that was colder than a block of ice.

“She’s sleeping. Be quiet, so she doesn’t wake up.”

“Are you to playing games with...kahk!”

Artpe clicked his tongue as he watched the men emerge from the darkness. He moved his fingers. The Mana Strings moved according to his will. They moved like whips with sentience, and they split through the air. The lives of two to three people were killed in a flash.

“He is stronger than the girl....!”

“It seems you guys are incapable of learning. Don’t you guys realize that you guys are dying in the order of who opened their mouth first?”

Artpe’s purple eyes let out a radiant light within the darkness. It was as if his eyes could pierce through all lies. His eyes only contained the truth. The party of men had tried a surprise attack relying on the darkness. His eyes was like the deliverer of death for these men.

“W...we can't win.”

“The one that is terrifying is actually him.... Kahk!”

‘Mana String. The experience I picked up struggling as a weakling was mixed with the Hero’s power to become a Unique spell....’

It wasn’t a proper spell. The Mana Threads was something he developed during the rough patches of his life as a demon. In the beginning , the Mana String was an unwelcome development for him.

However, he was able to quietly take care of this problem thanks to this spell. He was able to let Maetel sleep peacefully. This single reason was good enough for him to value this magic.

“We erred in assessing their capability.....”

“Where are you running away?”

Mana String was able to impart overwhelming force using Mana, but it consumed a lot of Mana. This was why it wasn’t a weapon that could be used freely in a battle situation.

This was why Artpe used all the information coming in through his eyes to find the most efficient trajectories. He moved his fingers according to the calculations he had made.

The men tried everything to stop it, but their weapons and feet were slower than the Mana String, which had no weight.

“Wait a moment. If you cooperate with us, you will have a place in the newly created kingdom.....”

“Good bye.”

The five strands of Mana Strings gathered at a single location. The last remaining man was still struggling to live. He died as he was cut into several slabs of meat. His face was full of resentment. Artpe let out a bitter laugh when he saw it.

‘From your perspective, your side was probably in the absolute

right. In your next life, I hope you will be able to live a life as a farmer where you won't have to kill or be killed. I will pray for you all.'

Artpe retracted the Mana Strings, and he checked Maetel, who was snuggled up against him. Her breathing was even. She was still asleep.

'That wasn't too bad.'

However, it seemed the disturbance wasn't at an end. From not too far away, the main guests were coming towards them.

"We were discovered, captain! If you are done retrieving the gem, you should help.... What!?"

From the beginning, Artpe hadn't bothered hiding his location. He didn't have any particular difficulty in dispatching the first group that had ambushed him, and it would be the same for those that had followed behind them.

"What the hell is....."

"Impossible.....!?"

He had wondered about the identity of the second group, who was drawn towards them like moths. It was none other than the knights that had accompanied the crown prince Silpennon. There were some amongst them that was suffering from serious wounds. Some amongst them had bloated face as if they were suffering under the effects of poison.

Still, they were better off than the men that were killed here. They had come here to ask for help, so they hadn't expected to witness the death of their other party. They were extremely surprised.

"Y....you bastard!?"

Artpe was wide awake, while Maetel was asleep. It wasn't too difficult to determine, who was the culprit.

“You guys are too noisy.”

Artpe only brought out a single strand of Mana String to confront their anger. These men were like scraps compared to the men that had ambushed Artpe’s party. They were maggots, who ran away, because they couldn’t handle a single level 118 knight.

“Be quiet. Forever.”

“Kuhk.....!”

The Mana String cut through the air. Four knights had survived, and they had run away towards this direction. He took care of them in six seconds. Afterwards, a woman ran into the clearing. She had great timing.

“You bastards! You dare to call yourselves knights, who protect the royal family.... Mmmm!?”

“Shhh.”

Artpe was still within the bedroll, and he was glaring at the female knight Leseti with narrowed eyes. Leseti saw the numerous corpses strewn around the clearing, so she closed her mouth.

She was pretty good on the uptake, so she was able to easily identify, who was behind the slaughter.

‘I had a hunch that he wasn’t normal, but I never expected him to be such an overwhelming force. Who is this young man.... Mmm?’

She was so scared that she was unable to let out even a squeak under Artpe’s murderous gaze. She silently went over the situation when she suddenly had an epiphany.

There was an incident near here only a year ago. Two heroes had been born in a country village. When they disappeared, the whole kingdom had been in an uproar!

Two youths....

They were incomprehensibly strong compared to their ages.

Black hair and blonde hair....

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

“Mmmm, Artpe.....?”

“Ah.”

Leseti couldn't hold back her exclamation of surprise. Maetel opened her eyes. Leseti belatedly realized she had made a mistake. Artpe sharply raised a finger, and Leseti shut her eyes when she saw it.

A brief amount of time had passed.

“Are you ok, Artpe?”

“I wasn't hurt at all, so you don't have to touch me constantly. I'll clean this up, so you should keep your eyes close.”

“I'm not going to close my eyes. I'm all right now. I'll be fine since Artpe is here.”

“You don't look fine.... All right. You do whatever you want.”

“Yes!”

If she hadn't seen the corpses everywhere around her, she would have been able to continue her sleep. However, once she found about about them, sleep wasn't an option. The two heroes got up from their sleeping place, and they put away the bedroll. They started working on cleaning up the corpses strewn about their surrounding.

Artpe took all of the equipment that was useful. He also took all the silver coins they possessed. Maetel gathered the corpses he was done 'looting.'

“Artpe, why do we have to kill other people?”

“It is the same reason as to why we killed the monsters. We all have something we want from each other. Everything else is just an excuse. The plethora of excuses given for harming living beings

are just embellishments.”

“I see..... The act of living is very hard in itself.”

“The important part is to realize that we have to live within such a world. You can respect the lives of other people, but when there is a collision, you have carry through to enforce your way of life.”

“Yes. All right.”

Thirteen year old brats were talking about philosophical bullshit as they calmly cleared away the corpses. What was she supposed to say to them? Should she disagree with their views? Should she tell them to go read more books?

Of course, Leseti was banned from speaking, so she didn't say anything. She continued to raise her two hands as she sat on her knees. This was a punishment devised by Artpe.

“That it. Did you gather all of them Maetel?”

“Yes!”

“All right.”

After Artpe threw all the corpses into the fire, he turned to look at Leseti. She still had her arms up as she carried out the order she was given. Artpe smirked as he spoke.

“Your punishment is at an end. You should go back to the crown prince. As you probably realize by now, no one will side with you even if you head back towards the palace. The two of you should go to a remote village. You should live a quiet life, while tending to cows.”

“Koohk.....”

Leseti couldn't give a proper retort. She just groaned.

Yes, the only thing going for the crown prince was that he was the legitimate heir. However, in regards to all other issues, the rebels held the upper hand. No one would side with them. That was the miserable truth.

”Hey”

At that moment, a young man pushed past the brush, and he gave a reply instead of Leseti.

“Do you know why there was a rebellion against the Diaz family?”

It was the red haired crown prince Silpennon. Of course, Artpe had already sensed him getting close. This was why he wasn’t surprised as he gave his reply.

“Did they perhaps attack the king on the fact that he wasn’t able to properly take care of the heroes?”

“You are correct. Of course, I don’t plan on putting the blame on you guys. That incident was merely the trigger. My uncle.... The duke was a wild beast, who had been waiting for an opportunity to tear into the king. If it wasn’t the escape of the heroes, he would have found another reason to start a rebellion”

Silpennon had already come to the same conclusion as Leseti that Artpe and Maetel were heroes. Still, his face remained aloof. It was said that a man grows through hardship. His gaze remained on Artpe instead of Maetel.

“You are right. Even if I recklessly went back to the palace, there isn’t much that I could do. I’m just a brat that was lucky enough to be born as the crown prince. If I act rashly, my head would be severed. It would be mounted next to the king’s head.”

“Your highness.....!”

“This is why I have to go with you guys.”

“What?”

His words were very unexpected. However, Silpennon continued to speak with a sincere voice.

“The duke rebelled using the fact that my father had lost track of the heroes. The duke used that reason to gain the throne. Now he

will use all available resources to find the heroes in an attempt to solidify his reign.”

“That’ll seems likely.”

“So what would happen if I’m already in the party of the heroes?”

What was this bastard talking about?

When Artpe glared at Silpennon, he provided an explanation.

“The new king would be unable to find the heroes, yet I would be in the party of the heroes. I would be helping the the heroes. In the end, we would succeed in killing the Demon King! At that time, who would the people and the nobles want on the throne! They would want me, who gained the title of hero!”

“Oh oh. It is a very risky and wild plan! Still, it isn’t too bad.”

“Isn’t it!?”

It was a good idea considering it was devised by a kid. This stupid kingdom put importance on titles compared to any other place in the world. This plan sounded like it could actually work!

Artpe nodded his head as if there was merit to his plan. Silpennon was excited by this fact, so he started shouting his words.

“That is why you guys should team up with me! From this moment on, I’ll throw away my rank as the crown prince. I’ll help you guys defeat the Demon King. I’ll become a key player within the hero’s party!”

“Hold your horses. There is a very big flaw within your plan that can’t be ignored.”

Artpe spoke coldly.

“You are too weak. You won’t be of any help to us. I’ll be blunt. You’ll be a burden, so get lost.”

“Koo-huhk!”

The astute comment was a critical hit! The crown prince had no way of refuting that fact! The current hero’s words had a multiplier effect!

Chapter 26 – Yesterday's Enemy (5)

The sun brightened the morning. Artpe caught several fishes from the ravine, and he used the Mana String to clean them. This magic wasn't meant to be used this way, but he didn't care. He was killing two birds with one stone by leveling up his Spell Level.

Maybe.

"Wow. Artpe's hand movements are exquisite."

"I'm not trying to boast, but I have a knack for useless talents."

"Leseti, are all magicians able to use such an odd spell?"

"This is the first time I've seen such a spell. It seems he is more special since he is a hero."

Silpennon and Leseti was also watching this sight.

If spoken bluntly, they had lost their positions and their escort guards. They were beggars now. Artpe felt a little bit bad for just sending them away, so he decided to send them off after a meal.

"So you guys didn't bring any foods you can eat?"

"We did bring a lot of money. Our kingdom specializes in manufacturing Dimensional Pouches."

"I'm sure you know this, but I'll say it just in case. Don't spend large sums of money in any old place."

"Why not?"

"Hah."

Artpe looked away from Silpennon. He looked at Leseti with sympathy in his eyes. He could clearly see the difficulty she would have to endure in the future.

".....hoong."

"Eh-eet."

However, Leseti avoided his gaze as her cheeks reddened.

In her stead, Maetel pinched Artpe's thigh.

"Huh?"

What the hell? Why were their reactions switched?

Artpe was bewildered as he rubbed at his thigh. At that moment, the crown prince added a supplementary explanation.

"For the past 20 years of her life, Leseti only focused on self-training and protecting me. She is a poor woman, who has yet to date a man. Even if you are young, she is accepting you in that fashion, because she is very thirsty."

"Your highness, it has been an honor to be able to serve you until now. Please be happy in your future endeavors."

"Why are you unsheathing your sword! I always trusted you to be by my side!"

"You revealed the reason why!"

"You aren't using honorifics!?"

Such a simple method was able to eliminate her sense of loyalty. He had a better idea now on why the Diaz Kingdom were overrun by the rebels.

He finished cleaning the fishes.

Artpe kept a small steel pot alongside his money inside the Dimensional Pouch. Maetel brought over edible plants, and he put in spices(50 bronze) he bought from the merchant. When the water came to a boil, he put the fishes in. Soon, a very pleasant smell started to emanate from it.

"It seems you are very experienced at doing all of this."

"If you fight and live in the mountains and fields, this type of skills becomes second nature to you."

The four people ate the finished fish soup. The rations

supplemented the meal. The food was eaten in a blink of an eye. Maetel always ate whatever Artpe made as if it was delicious. He could give her a ball of dirt, and she would say it was delicious. However, he had thought Silpennon would have a picky palate, since he was the crown prince. He ate it without complaining, and he even gave Artpe a compliment.

“Thank you. I enjoyed it very much.”

“How should I say this? You are so polite that it is annoying.”

“Mmm. His competency for household chores are great....”

He decided not to ask Leseti about what she was checking. Artpe finished washing the dishes. He stood up after he put away the pot into the Dimensional Pouch.

“Let’s go our own way from here on out.”

“Is there any way we can go with you guys? I guess this is to be expected. My ability is pitiful compared to you guys.....”

Silpennon was in low spirits. He lowered his head as he mumbled those words. This was the first time he had escaped the mantle of his position as the crown prince. It was at this moment that he realized how powerless he was for the first time in his life. His direction in life going forward would be determined on how he remedied that fact.

Artpe had a bitter expression on his face, and he asked Silpennon a question as if he was asking it in passing.

“So what do you plan on doing from here on out?”

“I planned on finding the heroes. Then I wanted to achieve the merit of defeating the Demon King. However, that plan fell into pieces, so I don’t know what..... I can’t go back to the castle. In truth, I’m at a dead end.”

“Leseti, do you have any other plans?”

“He is an annoying human being, but he is my lord. I will protect

him until I'm able to. That is it."

"Basically, you don't have any other plans."

"Koohk."

He had expected her to be a little bit smarter than Silpennon, but it seemed Leseti also didn't know much about the world.

If he let them go like this, they would die somewhere without anyone knowing about it. He could only see a miserable death for them in the future.

".....ssp. I guess it can't be helped. "

Artpe let out a sigh as he gave them a proposal.

"Let's form a temporary party."

"Are you....letting us into your party!?"

Silpennon's eyes shone, and even Leseti had a healthy glow when she heard the news. Maetel looked as if she was unsatisfied with something.

"I like being with Artpe. Just the two of us...."

"This is temporary. We'll do this until we clear one Dungeon. If I let this guy leave, he'll suffer a rough fate. I'll give him some basic lessons. I'll let him become indebted to me, and I'm sure he'll bring something back to me in the future."

"Are you supposed to say that in front of the person you are talking about?"

Silpennon spoke as he was dumbfounded, but his face remained bright. He now knew that Artpe cared about them.

When he saw Artpe ruthlessly kill the knights, he had doubts as to whether he was a hero. As expected, he was good at a fundamental level!

Of course, Artpe's intention was entirely different from what Silpennon had attributed to him.

‘Even if he was the crown prince, they don’t let anyone join the hero’s party. One has to be excellent and skilled at a very basic level. That is why the party members are able to stick around the hero without dying.’

The crown prince had the talent to become a thief. He was very remarkable.

If he was trained properly, he’ll be able to gain fame within the kingdom within couple years. No, his name would spread throughout the continent. Of course, in his past life, Silpennon was locked away inside the palace for five years alongside Maetel, and the rest was history.

‘If I expend a little bit of my time here, I can create a foundation he can build on. I would be making a powerful card that I can use later against the Demon King’s army. Moreover, he seems to have a personality of wanting to repay his debts. In light of that fact, there isn’t much downside in doing this.’

If one received a favor, it had to be paid back.

It was a reasonable sentiment. It was also true that it was hard to make good on such sentiments. However, the crown prince in front of him might have that great quality where he would keep true to his duties.

“I have a question.”

Silpennon hadn’t opened his mouth. It was Leseti.

“You just said a Dungeon. You speak so lightly about it.... Do you realize it is very hard to find a Dungeon? At this moment, countless adventurers are looking a Dungeon in an attempt to strike it rich. They roam the land, but they are barely able to find one after they fruitlessly search for several years. Even if they do find one, they just suffer a dog’s death.”

“I’m already well aware of that fact.”

“If we want to clear a decent Dungeon, we’ll have to stay together

for couple years. Is this a roundabout way of accepting us into your party?”

Maybe Leseti was hoping her words were true. She had come here based on the idea that she had to save the crown prince. However, she wasn't talented at anything except fighting and protecting someone.

He was young, yet he had ridiculous amount of power. Moreover, he was talented in many facets. If they were able to join Artpe's party, she would be able to just focus on fighting and guarding the crown prince.

On top of that, if the crown prince was able to grow up splendidly and play a support role in defeating the Demon King, he would be able to return triumphantly as the scion of the Diaz family.

“Well, aren't I right?”

She was 20 years old, but from Artpe's perspective, she still looked like a brat to him. She was trying hard to appear as if she was calm. However, there was a catch and a slight tremor in her voice that betrayed the desperation she was feeling. Artpe let out a laugh.

“You'll see.”

Two days had passed. The party stood in front of an old tree that was rotting away.

What was hiding there?

It was none other than an entrance to the Dungeon. Artpe merely extended his Mana, and the hollow portion of the tree expanded. It was readied itself to accept the adventurers.

“No way.....”

“This is impossible!”

Leseti had an agitated expression on her face. Silpennon was shocked as he turned to look at Artpe.

“How were you able to find it so quickly.....?”

“Accidents and events have a way of finding heroes even if they stay put, yet we are actively searching for a Dungeon right now. Of course, one or two Dungeons would show up.”

“Heroes are truly amazing!”

“That’s right. Artpe is truly amazing!”

This is why it is convenient to have idiots around!

“The magical energy I sense isn’t high or dense. The monsters inside will be of the common variety. Let’s go.”

It wasn’t as if this was an insignificant Dungeon. However, it couldn’t be disputed that it was a lousy Dungeon crawling with low level Slimes. Even if it was a lousy Dungeon, it was a very large one. This was why no adventurer was able to completely conquer this Dungeon in his past life! This was true even at the time of his death!

“Here. You should arm yourself with this.”

“Ooh-mmmmm.”

Artpe tossed a crappy equipment that Silpennon could arm himself with. Silpennon took the dagger, and he spoke with an uncertain voice.

“Do....do you think I can do this?”

“Who wanted an active role inside the hero’s party?”

“.....I did.”

At Artpe’s light provocation, Silpennon answered back with a firm voice. He nodded his head several times as if he was making a resolve. He gripped the dagger so hard that veins started to pop out on the back of his hand.

“All right. Since the hero plans on guiding me, I can’t turn that opportunity down. I’ll do it.”

“You are no longer in the position of being the crown prince. From now on, I want you to think about what position you want, and what kind of fighting style you want to fight with. You should battle with those points in your mind.”

“Understood.”

He started fidgeting with the short sword in one hand. He asked a question. It seemed his other hand was feeling empty.

“Do you have another one that is similar to this?”

“Hmmm.”

The act of using weapons with both hands sounded easy, but it wasn't something he would recommend..... Well, it would be helpful if he experienced this fact. At his request, Artpe took out another short sword.

“All right. The balance finally feels right. In truth, when I was bored within the palace, I used to busy my hands like this.”

“It must have been great. It seem being the crown prince was a job of leisure.”

Silpennon was finally satisfied after he alternately swung his daggers in each hand. At that moment, his information was updated.

[Silpennon Le Diaz]

[Level : 7]

[Dual Wielding Lv1]

“Ah.”

That's right. If seen in certain light, this guy would be considered to be a genius. Artpe was dumbfounded as he let out a bitter laugh.

Anyways, Silpennon was now ready for battle.

Leseti looked a bit disappointed.

Maetel had spend a year in a Dungeon, yet it seemed she was

eager to go into another one. She was excited.

“We are doing this Dungeon exploration to grow Silpennon’s ability. If possible, we should stay out of his way. Even if there are traps, we won’t be telling you about it, so you should firm your resolve. Is that clear?”

“.... all right.”

Silpennon gulped as he nodded his head.

The party members entered the Dungeon side by side.

The first one to speak inside the Dungeon was Maetel.

“Artpe, there are a lot of something here.”

“A lot? It should be. This Dungeon has a pretty high monster regeneration, but it is frequented by.... Huh.”

As soon as he entered the Dungeon, Artpe sensed an unusual amount of signatures. He activated his Read All Creation ability, and he was able to see that the numerous monsters were all Slimes.

A thought came to him at the same time.

‘When was this Dungeon became known to the humans?’

He was easily able to find the answer. In his past life, the Dungeon was first found by the hero’s party when they exited the palace. This Dungeon was revealed to the other adventurers after it was found by them. Of course, no one in this world knew about this place at this point in time!

“Ah. It seems we are the discoverers.”

“Discoverer? Is it something good?”

“Of course, it is good. No one has touched this place, so the rewards will be great. Since the traps are brand new, it’ll be hidden completely, so it’ll be thrilling to go through this place. You’ll also be able to experience monsters collapsing towards you.....”

“It sounds as if the negative outweighs the good!?”

Artpe looked down towards the end of the dark and damp corridor made out of wood. An incredibly large army of Slimes were coming towards them. Silpennon had also caught sight of them, and his face turned pale. Artpe let out a kind smile towards him.

“Cheer up. You can do this.”

“Wait a moment. This is a bit different from what we’ve talked about... Goo-ahk!?”

The Slimes knew that the intruders were ridiculously strong by instinct. This was why they immediately focused on Silpennon, who was the only one they had a shot of winning against.

Silpennon turned pale as he was about to encounter the Slimes. However, no one stepped forward to help him. In the end, he was instantly buried by the group of Slimes.

Artpe’s apathetic gaze turned towards Leseti. He asked her a question.

“Hey, guardian knight. What are you doing?”

“I trust in his highness. Well, if he dies, it can’t be help. By the way, Artpe, would you accept me into your party if I’m alone?”

“You are very forthright.”

“Ooh-ah-roo-koo-ahh-gyah-gyah-gyahk!”

It seemed Leseti’s way of thinking reached a turning point on her 20th year in life. Silpennon was buried by the Slimes, so it was hard to tell what he was yelling.

“Your highness, I have faith in in you! Still, just to safe, you should tell me what kind of funeral you want! You should have told me beforehand!”

“Ooh-gahh-gyahhhhhhhhk!”

After 45 minutes, Silpennon used his Dual Wielding style to kill all the Slimes. The three people smiled at him as if they knew he

would have succeeded. He had no words for them. He just clenched his two fists, and he made a resolve!

“I’ll become stronger... I will become stronger at all cost!”

“Yes, that’s the spirit!”

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhhhh!”

This was how the hero’s party started their second Dungeon exploration.

Chapter 27 – Dungeon, Evolution and Success

In Artpe's past life, the hero's party was the first to explore the Slime Dungeon first. Afterwards, the Dungeon became popular amongst the adventurers.

First, the Dungeon produced only Slimes. This was why the danger to the adventurers was very low, and there weren't that many traps present. Moreover, when one killed a certain amount of Slimes, random treasure chests appeared when the Mana within the Dungeon was activated. This was why one could expect a decent amount of profit in this Dungeon.

"Basically, this is the best place for a beginner adventurer to grow. Moreover, it is also a great place to learn about Dungeons."

"So why are there so many Slimes-ahhhhhhhhk!"

"Tsk. He looked like he was going to die, yet he isn't dying."

"Who was it right now! Who clicked their tongue at me-ahhhhhhk!"

Silpennon was fighting hard. Normally, a talent bloomed the brightest in brutal situations rather than a relaxed surrounding. A single misstep would allow the group of Slimes to swallow him, and he would be digested by them. This was why he was squeezing out his abilities, and he was able to push himself past his limit.

When the two daggers danced in the air, the severed portion of the Slimes were sent flying. Silpennon's battle capability was increasing in real-time. As expected, a genius was a genius.

"It seems one doesn't need a coach in battle."

"Is that so? Why is he moving like that? I have questions...."

"You can't use yourself as the standard, Maetel. If so, everyone will be disqualified in the preliminaries."

“Too many! There are too many of them! Damn Slimes!”

The Slime Dungeon was different in many ways to the first Dungeon entered by Artpe and Maetel. The previous Dungeon had a limit as to how many monsters could form. This Dungeon created new monsters every time it had any spare Mana.

It didn't matter how many monsters were still left within. It spawned them as if it wanted to make the monsters explode out from the Dungeon!

The monsters spawned within the Dungeon was influenced by the Record and the Mana. These components were unique to each Dungeon. This was why an adventurer was unable to claim to be an expert after exploring one or two Dungeons.

“That is why the rooms are infested with Slimes. Well, the Slimes are activating all the traps, so at the very least, we don't have to worry about him dying from the traps.”

“This is all thanks to the Slimes!”

“Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Silpennon frantically swung the daggers in each hand as he cut into the Slimes. His Dual Wielding had evolved into level 2. His growth couldn't compare to what Maetel went through when she fought monsters for her first time in a Dungeon. Still, he wasn't too bad.

However, the Slimes overcame the death of their comrades as they kept coming. Their main objective was to eat Silpennon. The Slimes charged forward without looking back. Inevitably, the stronger ones started to show up.

“Stop! Don't come here!”

“Oh oh oh.”

The sight reminded Artpe of the time when the combined forces of all the countries on the continent were sent towards the Demon

King's army. If a hundred of such group continued to come at him, Silpennon would succumb to them eventually!

"Eeeek. Help me before I fall!"

"I'll bury you in a sunny place, your highness."

"How can you call yourself a guardian knight! You're fired! Ooh-gahhhhhhhh!"

Silpennon's struggle continued. He had been a level 7, but at some point, he had reached level 18. As he moved deeper into the Dungeon, the level of the Slimes continued to creep upwards. However, Silpennon was slowly getting a feel for fighting against a large group, so a good fight ensued.

Maetel tilted her head in confusion as she watched the life and death battle between human and Slimes.

"Artpe, didn't the Skeletons retreat when they were at a disadvantage? Why do these monsters continue to charge forward?"

"Silpennon looks beatable compared to us. These guys are constantly hungry. They'll keep attacking unless their opponent is stronger than them by a fair amount"

"Why don't they eat each other?"

The question was very well-timed.

"Slimes don't eat those that are from the same race as them. However, it isn't prudent to view monsters through common sense. An exception always exists."

Artpe gave his explanation as he pointed towards Silpennon.

Silpennon had just killed a group of Slime, and he was wiping slime off of his body.

"Even if they are monsters from the same race, their behavior pattern changes depending on the Dungeon, environmental factors and other variables. Amongst the monsters, the change that the

Slime undergoes is very well-defined and simple. Moreover, most Dungeons evolve to match the behavior patterns of the monsters.”

“So the Dungeons and monsters live and breathe together?”

“That’s right. Maetel is smart.”

“Hoo-hoot.”

It was a rare praise, so there was a bright smile on Maetel’s face. However, the only ones to laugh in an easygoing manner were the heroes.

“Your explanation makes me feel uneasy.... It is as if you are trying to say our mere presence will cause changes in the behavior pattern of the Slimes.”

Leseti made a pretty sharp observation. When he heard her words, a chill went up Silpennon’s spine. He quickly turned towards Artpe to shout at him.

“I want to leave this crazy place!”

“It is too late. It has already started.”

After Artpe finished speaking, an ominous sound of Slimes moving across the floor was heard. The sound was amplified by several degrees.

“The Slimes.... They are retreating?”

“It isn’t just the monsters. The Dungeon is really changing.....!”

There was a room at the end of the hallway that had been sealed. The room collapsed. It continued onto the next one and so forth. When a change occurred within a Dungeon, the most common phenomenon to occur was the collapse of the strict boundaries that kept the rooms separate.

It also meant that the Dungeon was becoming more dangerous, and the monsters would become stronger. In turn, the reward would also be greater. When an adventurer feels the change in the Dungeon, one would have to make a quick decision and act on it.

Silpennon had two choices. He could go forward or retreat.

“As I’ve said before, I’m getting out of here!”

“I have to express my regret to you. There are two type of changes that may occur within a Dungeon. There are the Dungeons that allow the adventures to retreat when they desire it. Then there are the ones that allow you to come in easily, but it won’t let you go easily.”

Artpe pointed back at the sealed entrance of the Dungeon, and he smirked.

“This Dungeon is the latter type.”

Silpennon’s face crumpled.

“My god..... Doesn’t this basically impose a death sentence on the adventurers!”

“Are you under some kind of delusion? Dungeons aren’t here to help develop adventurers. The Dungeons aren’t here to give them treasures. The Dungeons merely exists. The danger and opportunity is distributed equitably to all.”

Of course, Artpe’s Read All Creation ability allowed him to see what changes were occurring within the Dungeon. At its heart, this was a Slime Dungeon. Even if it evolved in innovative ways, the only one in danger would be Silpennon.

“The prerequisites that causes the change in the behavior pattern of the Slimes is very simple. First, the intruders has to be strong enough that the Slime can’t win in a direct confrontation. Secondly, the intruder has to show no signs of retreating. The intruder has to rush forward continuously. Third, there has to be an overwhelming number of Slimes present. When all of these conditions are met, they start eating each other to become stronger.”

“That’s what’s happening right now!”

Silpennon screamed those words out. The Slimes were wriggling around, and they were combining to become larger. Moreover, the walls of the Dungeon continued to collapse. The Slimes that were on alert within these rooms came forward. They kept rushing towards the Slime that was eating its own brethrens!

“Oh oh. It is rare to see one that can eat so much. If we are lucky, this might ratchet up a level.”

In many ways, the current situation was good for them. First, the Slime Dungeon hadn't been found yet, so a lot of Slimes had amassed within. Their party including Silpennon was overpowered in terms of martial strength(Silpennon would disagree with this point). Then there was the massive amount of Mana in reserve that would allow the Dungeon to make changes alongside the monsters.

This was how Artpe changed history once again. The Slime Dungeon would never be a beginner's Dungeon from this point forward. This was the start of a hellhole that was now under the rule of the evolved Slime!

“Up a level? What do you mean by up a level? Are you perhaps talking about a high rank Class! Tell me it ain't so!”

“It can't be, your highness. As you've seen, the Slimes are the lowest ranked monsters that range from level 5 to level 10. The probability of these monsters combining to form a monster over level 50 is.....”

“Ah. The Dungeon is collapsing.”

“Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!?”

Once a Slime starts to eat its brethrens, it won't stop until it's sure it can eat all of the intruders.

In the beginning, Silpennon had driven the Slimes into a frenzy. Moreover, Artpe and the other members of his party was also within the Dungeon. The Slime knew it couldn't beat them with a

single floor worth of Slimes, so it started preying on the Slimes on the next floor. The Dungeon received its intention, and the Dungeon collapsed the floor!

“Kyahhhhhhk!”

“Koohk!?”

Of course, the adventurers, who had found this Dungeon, fell downwards.

“Artpe!”

“Tsk!”

Artpe swung his hand, and he extended three strands of Mana String. He was at the center as he wrapped Maetel, Leseti and Silpennon with the Mana Strings. They safely landed on the Dungeon’s 2nd floor, which was below the collapsed hallway.

[Geeeeeeeeeee]

[Sss-oooooh, sss-ooooooooooh]

“I’m starting to hear something!”

“Oh. If we are lucky, it might even gain self-awareness. Ee-yah. There are much more Slimes on the 2nd floor! This is fun! They are all combining!”

“Ya-ho!”

“Did you guys come here to have fun!”

They were only Slimes, but the ones on the 2nd floor was much higher in level than the ones on the 1st floor. The Slimes didn’t care if the ceiling had fallen. They were all over the 2nd floor, and the giant Slime that was formed on the 1st floor started eating the other helpless Slimes.

[Keeeeeeeeeeeeeee]

“Oh oh. I don’t like it. The color of each Slime is being mixed inside that big Slime, and it is giving me a bad feeling!”

“How can the color of the Slime change like that, Artpe?”

“As a matter of fact.....”

“If you have the time to leisurely explain the ecology of a Slime, you should do something about that bastard, Artpe!”

As it absorbed new types of Slimes into its body, the giant Slime was dyed with all kinds of colors! The party watched the gluttonous Slime. It was akin to watching someone else’s house burn down. Artpe could see the level of the enormous Slime rise in real time.

[Big Slime]

[Level : 33]

“It’s all right. It is still a lousy monster. Ah. Of course, a single hit will kill you.”

“You should have told me that first!”

As if Silpennon had been waiting for such words, he quickly ran towards Leseti. Leseti talked about his grave and funeral, but she didn’t really plan on letting him die. She let him hide behind her.

“For your information, it is an Elite monster now.”

“Don’t we get better rewards for killing Elite monsters?”

“It is also stronger than the monsters at the same level.”

The Big Slime was well aware of its station. It had grown a lot, but it knew it would get cut into pieces by the other humans before it was able to kill the detestable red haired brat.

This was why it wasn’t satisfied. It kept eating all the Slimes on the 2nd floor. In the process, the hidden passages of the Dungeons were revealed, and all kinds of rare Slimes started to pop out. These Slimes were much more colorful. They either possessed a faint trace of magical energy or they were stickier.

Of course, they became nutrients that fueled the growth of the

Big Slime.

‘Uh. In the past, I’ve never heard of a rumor about secret passages inside this Dungeon.’

Of course, Artpe didn’t search out Dungeons in his past life, so he hadn’t had the chance to use his Read All Creation ability within them. Basically, a secret that had never been found in his previous life was revealed to him in the present.

Well, this was only a Slime Dungeon. There probably wasn’t anything great....

[Goo-ohhhhhh-ohng!]

“It let out a cry!”

“It’s shining!”

“Huh. I might have been wrong.”

The rare Records that wasn’t usually allowed to be accessed by a normal Slime had been gathered in one place. The Slime broke through another wall, and it took another step forward. The party members saw a very rare sight where a monster reached a high rank class through gaining a high level.

[Great Slime]

[Level : 50]

“Ee-yah. That one is splendid. It reached the status of an Elite Rare monster!”

“How long are you going to just watch!”

“Hmm. You are right. I should start taking action.”

Artpe found a good sized rock, and he put a decent amount of Mana into it. He threw it towards a nearby Slime. After the Slime ate the rock, it was absorbed into the Great Slime.

Silpennon cried out suddenly.

“I told you to take care of it! When did I tell you to feed the

Slime!”

“Aigo. It is eating it well.”

“Stop feeding it!”

The Great Slime continued to evolve. However, the Slimes on the 2nd floor was all gone. Even the secret tunnels were all opened. It meant there wasn't a single monster left on the 2nd floor.

“Ah. It is easting the treasure chests.”

“It's all right. It takes a very long time for a Slime to digest objects. We can recover it later after we kill it. If the item can't last until then, it means it isn't worth that much!”

“I'm asking if you can really kill that thing!”

“Ah. The 2nd floor is also collapsing.”

Finally, the Dungeon's 3rd floor was revealed. They hadn't moved much, yet they were able to clear the 1st and 2nd floor. It was great, since they didn't have to waste any calories. He pitied Silpennon, who was wasting all the saved calories by screaming his head off.

“Wa-ah! The 3rd floor also has a lot of secret passageways!”

“The Great Slime's behavior is set now. It will eat all of its brethrens. The other Slimes on this floor won't consider us enemies. The Great Slime is there enemy. That is why....”

“Wa!”

The Great Slime was eating all the Slimes residing on the 3rd floor! While it was doing so, Artpe kept infusing nearby rocks with his Mana. He kept feeding the Slimes inside the Dungeon.

“How long are you going to just watch it?”

“I'm not sure. Maybe, until all the Slimes coalesces into one?”

“When will that occur!”

“That's a very good question.”

Artpe let out a sweet smile as he answered the question.

“I have no idea!”

The Slime continued to stuff itself. It continued until they reached the 6th floor.

In Artpe’s past life, the Slime Dungeon had only been explored to the 5th floor.

Chapter 28 – Dungeon, Evolution and Success (2)

[Giant Slime]

[Level : 102]

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhh..... Oh-oh-oh-oh....]

“Ee-yah. We’ve actually arrived at this point.”

They were on the Dungeon’s 7th floor. For some reason, the adventurers had been barred from coming down this far for in the past. Artpe’s party had gained access to this region.

Of course, the one to act in their stead was the Giant Slime that had finally went past level 100. It was that particular Slime.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

[Kee-heeeeeeeeeee!]

The Giant Slime had grown so big that it had to destroy the Dungeon’s passageway to move around. The level 50 and over Slimes, who resided on the Dungeon’s 7th floor, were screaming as they ran away.

He had only known this place as a beginner’s Dungeon. He never expected to find high Class Slimes residing here. It seemed the Dungeon was structured in such a way that the hidden lower floors were only revealed when the corridors were destroyed.

Basically, a high Class party over level 250 had to come into a lowly Slime Dungeon, and they had to indiscriminately use Skills that would cause structural damage. Or they could do what Artpe’s party had done. Artpe had baited the Slimes to consume each other, and this resulted in the lower floors being revealed. This was a method that had never been used in his previous life.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Oh. It’s eating them. It’s eating again.”

“How rare is that one, Artpe?”

It seemed even Maetel realized that this particular Slime was slowly turning into something remarkable. Moreover, the evolving monster and the involvement of the Dungeon reminded her of the first Dungeon they cleared. It reminded her of the Record Link, so her interest in the matter was getting deeper.

“Yes, let me see.... It is a Special Rare Elite monster. Numerous requirements has to be met for a normal Slime to reach that point. It was possible, because no one had yet to set foot inside this Dungeon. It wouldn’t have happened if there wasn’t an enormous amount of Slimes spawned within this Dungeon.”

“It’s really an incredible monster!”

It had went past level 100 to reach Special Rare Elite status. It had almost reached level 120 right now, so it was a monster that would be able to kill Leseti if she wasn’t careful. Leseti unsheathed her sword from her waist. She was very tense as she asked Artpe a question.

“Shouldn’t we kill it soon? No, don’t we no choice but to kill it now?”

“Not really. I just had a thought. How great a Slime would form if it was allowed to swallow an entire Dungeon? I keep thinking about it!”

“Why does your curiosity get piqued over such a topic!”

In truth, the Giant Slime had assessed the battle capability of Artpe’s party when it reached level 100. It decided it wouldn’t fare well against them, so it charged towards the 7th floor.

As its level grew, its ability to sense Mana became more accurate. Basically, its intelligence was increasing.

Of course, despite this fact, the Slime continued to eat the Mana-

infused rocks. Even if it was smart, it was only a smart Slime. The fact that it was able to level up didn't mean that it could surpass the limitation of its race.

“Are the Mana-infused stones you are throwing accelerating the growth of the Slime?”

“It is as I've said before. It takes awhile for the Slime to digest objects infused with Mana. It is the same as the treasure chests and artifacts it ate as it descended from the 1st floor to the 6th floor. You don't have to worry too much about it.”

“So why do you keep feeding it!”

Leseti and Silpennon didn't have any deep knowledge about magic, so they were frustrated at Artpe's bizarre actions. On the other hand, Maetel had a rough idea on what he was doing.

She had hunted in a Dungeon with him for the past year. In that period of time, she had never seen Artpe waste a single drop of Mana.

“Uh. The 7th floor is collapsing.”

“Wow. There's a silver treasure chest over there. Ah. The Slime ate it.”

“This isn't the time to leisurely watch the Slime eat!”

The same scenario kept repeating, so Artpe was used to wrapping Mana Strings around the party members. Artpe made sure he wasn't hurting the others as they landed softly on the Dungeon's 8th floor.

[Sheeeeeeee-sheeeeeeee.]

[Gee-gee-gee-gee.]

There were Slimes over level 70 residing on this floor. Each Slime was considered to be rare in terms of probability of them making an appearance in the world.

They were all born with great attributes. Some could use simple

magic or they could change a part of their body. Some had a special camouflage ability, and others could counterattack when they were hit with a subpar attack on reflex. The variety of Slimes that existed here was vast. The Slimes were quite surprising....!

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhng!]

The Giant Slime was eating every single one of them. The other Slimes were showing up in style, but they were swallowed before they could do anything. The Big Slime was the calamity of the Dungeon! It was like the second coming of the Demon King within this Dungeon!

“I kinda feel bad for the Slimes now.....”

“Hey, look at that. It is extending its body to eat them all at once.”

It seemed the Giant Slime was tired of eating them one by one. It extended its body from side to side, and it swept over the Slimes that were all over the Dungeon. The Giant Slime melted them all down. It looked as if a wave was sweeping through the Dungeon.

“That looks like a wave? It is so pretty.....”

“Someday, I’ll take you to a real ocean.”

“Yes! I’ll look forward to it, Artpe!”

The two Heroes were mellow even as they watched the Giant Slime stuff itself. Silpennon looked at them with salty eyes as he mumbled to himself.

“Artpe was able to compare such a horrifying sight to a wave, and Maetel admired him for it. I think both of them has a screw loose.....”

“It seems your highness’ delusions are slowly becoming shattered.”

When it ate all the Slimes on the 8th floor, the Giant Slime had reached level 120. At this point, Leseti would have to fight through

the day and night for four days to kill it.

“A...Artpe.... Are you sure it isn't time yet?”

“Leseti.”

Artpe tossed several rocks with significant amount of Mana infused within them. He helped satiate the appetite of the Giant Slime then he spoke to Leseti with a voice that was low and silky.

“Ooht.”

At his solemn attitude, Leseti once again failed to act her age as her heart beat faster. However, she came to her senses when she heard the words coming out of his mouth.

“We are about to see something that will never happen again in history. Even if I have to sacrifice Silpennon's life and your life, I'll have to watch this unfold!”

“Why don't you or Maetel sacrifice your own lives!”

Artpe snorted at her ridiculous words. He gave a response to her words.

“I don't know about you guys, but we won't fall to a mere Slime.”

“You cowardly hero! Kill it immediately! Let's kill that bastard!”

When it ate everything on the 8th floor, the Giant Slime took time to think this over. Should it just charge them? Was it strong enough?

It was confident that it could eat the female knight and the red haired brat. However, the other two brats made it feel uneasy. If it was uneasy, it had to eat more. The Giant Slime made a firm resolve as it made a request to the Dungeon.

Open the 9th floor!

“Maybe, this is what happens when a Dungeon encounters a hero. It could be a special change that occurs to match the current situation of the heroes.”

Artpe watched the Giant Slime eat the level 100 and above Slimes on the 9th floor. He became pretty sober as he mumbled to himself. Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked him a question.

“Does that hold true when we face other adventurers?”

“What I’m discussing right now isn’t that simple of a problem. A hero is born when a Demon King appears. A hero’s presence could create a Dungeon, a city or even a country. A hero causes a fundamental change to one’s surrounding.”

He had explained this before to Maetel once. He wasn’t joking. It was real. The hero’s existence itself was a miracle, and the hero was the focal point in causing changes to the Records.

If one thought about it from that perspective, the biggest variable causing his past life and the current life to change so starkly wasn’t the action of Maetel. The change might be driven by the existence of the newly born hero in Artpe.

“Of course, a hero possesses incredible abilities within one’s body. However, they have an uncharted ability to cause change to a situation. Maybe, this Dungeon and the growth of the Slime might be aggressively helped by our presence.”

The Slime eventually went over level 150. It was so large that it wasn’t able to move unless it caused changes to its body. The amount and density of the magical energy within its body wasn’t normal anymore.

These were Slimes that would have probably rested inside the heart of the Dungeon until end of time, yet the Dungeon opened up the walls when the floor was broken by the Giant Slime. The Giant Slime moved at the guidance of the Dungeon, and the other Slimes were letting out wails of resentment.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhh.]

“That’s right. You are eating well.”

Artpe was feeding the Giant Slime by habit. As he threw the rocks infused with Mana, he looked up. His eyes were letting out a purple light as he used his Read All Creation ability. He gathered all information from his surrounding.

There was the crumbled walls, and the hallway that looked like it was about to fall apart. Then there was the remains of the Slimes and the Giant Slime that was eating all of them.

He was slowly able to see the entire structure of the Dungeon.

“The 10th floor is the end.”

“Artpe, your eyes.....”

Silpennon was taken aback as he sensed unfathomable energy within Artpe’s eyes. Normally, it wasn’t something people noticed. This made Artpe have a pretty good opinion of Silpennon.

“Is that perhaps the Mystic Eyes?”

“It’s a secret.”

Artpe grinned as he extended one hand. As always, three strands of Mana String came out.

“We just have to endure it once more. You should just guard your master, Leseti. Silpennon, you should look at what happens with both eyes wide open.”

“You.....”

A fair amount of time had passed since they had entered the Dungeon. They had descended from the 1st floor to the 9th floor . They watched the evolution of a single Slime. It had been a fun and exciting experience, but.... It was time for the heroes to act in earnest.

“Just endure it once more. You should even be careful about breathing on the 10th floor. Ah. Unsheathe your sword, Maetel.”

“Yes!”

“Please use the longsword instead of the bastard sword.”

“.....yes!”

The Slimes on the 9th floor were all gone now. The Giant Slime had achieved level 168, and it thought it had a chance against them. It dragged its enormous body towards Artpe’s party. It was very slow.

No, it had thought about going down to the 10th floor, but it decided to confront them on the 9th floor! Silpennon was about to let out words of complaint when Artpe opened his mouth. He let out a quiet instruction, and it changed turned the entire situation on its head.

“Maetel, Berserk. Show off your power. You should only show it off.”

“Yes, I understand what you are trying to say.”

“Berserk!?”

Leseti knew about the terrifying Buff Skill, so she let out a shout. She wrapped up Silpennon, and she distanced herself from Maetel.

However, she thought over what he had said. Berserk wasn’t a skill that could be activated at will. Wasn’t it automatically activated in extreme circumstances? Moreover, Maetel was a brat, who received her Class only a year ago. How could she handle Berserk!

It probably wasn’t Berserk. Leseti thought Maetel was using an artifact’s option or a skill that was a poor imitation of Berserk. She had already made up her mind as she observed Maetel.....

“Hoo-ooh..... Hoohp.”

“What the.... She can activate Berserk at will!?”

When she realized Maetel could freely control this vast power, Leseti was thunderstruck.

Until now, Maetel had already shown herself to be strong.

However, when she used the Bone Gauntlet's buff option and Berserk, she became as strong as a being at level 200.

How ridiculous was this! The leader of this country's order of knights had yet to pass the level 200 threshold. A mere 13 year old child hero was displaying power of that caliber!

Of course, Maetel was using Berserk, but she was able to have full control over the skill. She was as strong as most level 200 being, who possessed a high rank Class.

Maetel put her rising anger into her longsword. She had a very refined posture, which was ill-matched with her slender body. She pointed the sword at the Giant Slime as she opened her mouth.

“Are you really going to fight me?”

[Goo...goo-ohhhhhhh.....!]

Of course, the Giant Slime could feel how strong she was. It didn't take long to find out its answer. It immediately broke the hallway that separated the 9th and 10th floor. It dragged the party down towards the 10th floor!

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh-ohng!]

“Yes!”

As if he had been waiting for this moment, Artpe stylishly surrounded the Mana Strings around the party as they landed on the 10th floor.

The Giant Slime had gotten cold feet when it saw Maetel's show of force. It didn't even look back as it ran rampant as it ate everything. The party was left behind, and they watched the result of Maetel showing her power once. Silpennon and Leseti were too dumbfounded to speak.

“Good job, Maetel.”

“Don't. If you give me too much praise, I'll feel too good and the Berserk will be canceled.”

Maetel was trying very hard not to smile as she maintained her stance. Artpe snickered at her words, and he took out an item from his Dimensional Pouch.

“Uh?”

“Uh.....!?”

When Silpennon and Leseti recognized it, they both let out a strangled sound at the same time. Artpe ignored them, and he focused his Mana into the item.

After being injected with Mana, the Demite's Gemstone was activated. It started emitting purple light that was brighter than the light within Artpe's eyes.

Chapter 29 – Dungeon, Evolution and Success (3)

“That! Give it back to me!”

“You can’t take back what you gave me.”

“Ooh-gooooo.”

The two of them now knew the value of the gem. They still didn’t know what kind of gem it was, but at the very least, they knew that it was the main reason why men had desperately tracked them down when they ran away from the palace.

However, Artpe stuck out his red tongue as he teased them. He continued to pour Mana into the Demite’s Gemstone.

“Can you hear me? No , I don’t think it can communicate yet.”

The Demite’s Gemstone won’t show its true worth until it was refined.

However, it was such an amazing gem that it could amplify one’s Mana, and it had the ability to remember magic spells. Even at its current form, it was a remarkable item. Artpe was satisfied with it until now.

“What are you trying to do with that! Are you perhaps going to feed it to the Slime like the rocks from before?”

“You are mad. If you do that, the Slime would most definitely evolve a step forward....”

“That is what I want.”

The Giant Slime was desperately looking for a power that would allow it to overpower Maetel.

Again, the Dungeon’s 10th floor acted in concert with the Giant Slime’s struggle. Large changes occurred once again. The walls that divided the rooms melted away. All the secret passageways

were revealed. The Dungeon allowed the Giant Slime to encounter the rest of the remaining Slimes.

[Keeeeeeeeee!]

[Gee-geek! Gee-gee-gee!]

The floor abruptly became a large plaza, and all the Slimes thrown away by the Dungeon knew what the Giant Slime intended. They didn't want to die in vain, so they did their best to oppose the Giant Slime.

The party was watching mere Slimes. It would theoretically be ridiculous for them to feel any emotions for the Slimes. However, they were faced with an impressive and overwhelming sight.

“Even such simple organisms fight hard to live...”

“They are no different than humans.”

“What kind of.... Humans are....!”

“Quiet.”

He didn't want to have a discourse about life with a brat. Artpe let out a deep sigh, then for the last time, he injected his Mana into the Demite's Gemstone.

His preparation was at an end.

“How's your Mana reserve, Maetel?”

“If it is just maintaining Berserk, I have enough. If I use the Option.... I think I can use it about three times.”

“All right. You should be on standby.”

Artpe didn't hesitate as he threw the purple colored gemstone held by his hand. Coincidentally, one of the Slime, who had been opposing the Giant Slime, swallowed it.

[Geeeeeee-eeee]

“It really ate it!”

Of course, it didn't matter how high the Slime's level was. The Demite's Gemstone wasn't an item that would be dissolved so easily. The Slime, who possessed the gem, knew it had become stronger. It coordinated with the other Slimes to attack the Giant Slime.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhh!]

The Giant Slime ate all of them. The Giant Slime's wound healed easily from just eating its brethren.

The Giant Slime's anatomy was simple, so it was easy for it to heal itself. By eating its brethren, it was able to grow immediately, and it was leveling up at a fast pace. This was why the Giant Slime had targeted them.

"The number of Slimes is decreasing."

"In the beginning, there were around 5,000 of them."

"I don't know how this Dungeon was made, but the effects of Mana becomes stronger as one travels deeper into the Dungeon. This is why this floor has stronger Slimes, and they are more numerous here."

It was easier for strong monsters to spawn at location with high density of Mana. Even if it was Maetel and Artpe, it would have taken them several days to kill all the Slimes that came out all at once from the secret passageways. However, the Giant Slime was killing all of them instead.

"This really is like the Record Link!"

"It isn't a completely closed system, so it won't be efficient like the Record Link. However, if one wants to see an organism 'evolve', this might be a better method than the Record Link."

"I look forward to it!"

It was very rare to come across such a high ranked Slime, so they would be able to look forward to the reward. Artpe and Maetel was

still conversing in a calm manner in front of such an overwhelming spectacle. Silpennon and Leseti were taken aback by this fact, but they reached a point where they decided not to think about it any further.

“Ah. It went in.”

The Delmite’s Gemstone was inside the Giant Slime’s body. At that moment, the numerous mana-infused stones that was within its body reacted to the Delmite’s Gemstone. A small resonance started to occur. Of course, this was what Artpe had been aiming for.

“I see the end to the Slimes.”

“We really don’t have much time left. Be ready, Maetel.”

“Yes, I’m ready.”

There really were many varieties of Slimes nesting here. Dungeons were something that was rare on the continent. Maybe they were worth researching.

However, he was watching a single Slime consolidating all the Slimes it had eaten.

[Geeeeeeeeeeeeeee!]

In the end, all the structures on the 10th floor were gone, and the whole floor had been turned into a wide open plaza. If one discounted the living and breathing members of Artpe’s party, there was only one Giant Slime on the floor.

It had eaten everything within the Dungeon. Everything that possessed Mana was within its body. This was an unprecedented feat. This being was pushing itself towards a higher Class.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhng!]

“My god. It is letting out light.... This is...”

“The Slime must be evolving!”

“There is a higher Class that can be reached!?”

Artpe’s eyes let out a strange light as he looked at the Slime letting out light from all over its body. This was something that had never been seen before on this continent. This moment was sweet and exciting!

Artpe had a smile on his lips before he knew it. He had come here in an attempt to educate Silpennon, so he had never expected to hit a jackpot here. As expected, a Demon.... A human should be good to other people in one’s life!

[Giant Slime]

[Level : 199]

When it went past level 100, it was given the name of Giant Slime.

At some point, a much bigger body appeared from within the light.

[Huge Slime]

[Level : 200]

The body of the Slime was letting out a rainbow light. Its body possessed enormous amount of Mana, and its intelligence increased by another tier.

Its body was much bigger than before, but when it moved, it was more efficient in its use of energy. Artpe immediately checked it with his Read All Creation ability, and he found out the Slime had several new skills. These skills helped the Slime efficiently capture and digest its prey. These needed skills were gathered in one place to strengthen the Slime.

The part that gave Artpe most joy was its name of Huge Slime. It sounded extremely simple, but the name of this entity never existed on this continent before. If he ranked how rare it was, it would probably be considered to be ultra rare.

“There we go.”

[There we go.]

It was as if Artpe and Slime had made a promise to speak at the same time.

As expected, it gained enough intelligence to be able decipher the human's intention!

[I can eat you all!]

When its body was trembling from delight, Artpe raised his voice to yell out loudly.

“You can attack it now, Maetel!”

“Understood!”

[I can now eat you all!]

The Slime was large enough to fill the plaza. The evolved Slime attacked the party. However, before it could use its skills, the Sword Energy gathered at the tip of the long sword was let loose. The golden energy traveled in a straight line to impact on the Slime!

[This isn't enough.....!]

The Huge Slime was strengthened so much that Maetel's Mana-infused attack pierced its body once before it healed its wound. Maetel's attack stalled the Slime for only 3 seconds!

“Hyper Rubbing!”

However, Artpe had completed all his preparations beforehand, so he had plenty of time to pull the trigger.

[Ggoo-ooooo-ooohk!?!]

The Huge Slime let out a terrible scream as its body started to writhe. The preys it had wanted to eat was right in front of it, yet it started to hit its body against the blameless Dungeon floor and walls. It threw a fit.

It had gained higher intelligence, so the pain it perceived had increased dramatically. The fact that it had been sure of its victory made the defeat a bitter pill to swallow.

“I never knew magic could be used this way....”

“Magicians are a scary existence!”

The target of Artpe’s Hyper Rubbing were the rocks and the Delmite’s Gemstone swallowed by the Slime.

It had assumed that these objects were part of its body, but they started rubbing crazily against its body as if they had a mind of its own. There was no way it could endure the spell without losing its mind!

[Goo-oooooooooh.....!]

Still, it refused to give up. It had broken through from the 1st floor to the 10th floor, and it had greedily eaten all the members of its race. Mere pain wouldn’t make it give up on its objective. Its greed was too strong for that to happen.

“Tsk. As expected, this level of attack won’t cut it.”

The Delmite’s Gemstone boosted the power of Hyper Rubbing by a ridiculous amount, so he had hoped this attack would be able to bring down the Slime. However, he had underestimated its willpower.

[Goo-ooohhhhhh! I’ll eat! I’ll eat! I’ll eat! I’ll eat!]

Even as its body was breaking apart from within, it moved its body to attack the party. When Silpennon and Leseti saw the enormous body of the Slime move slowly towards them, they didn’t offer any resistance. They just trembled in fear.

At that moment, Artpe put one hand atop Maetel’s hand, which was gripping the longsword.

“Let’s attack it for the second time, Maetel.”

“Y...yes..”

This was physical contact initiated by Artpe. Maetel's heart felt as if it was on cloud nine. She was so happy that it was difficult to maintain her Berserk skill. If the skill was canceled, they would lose to the Slime.

She was having a hard time controlling her emotions, so her eyes started to spin.

Artpe didn't realize what she was feeling. He gave her an order with a calm voice.

"You just have to attack like before. You should gather your energy and shoot it towards the Slime. I'll take care of the rest."

"Yes, I'll try....."

Maetel worked desperately to control her heart, and she gathered her Mana at the tip of her sword. At that moment, he used the Mana Link to provide Mana to her. When she realized what was happening, Maetel used Record Divide, so Artpe could share more Mana with her.

Even if it was the same skill, its power would be amplified by a lot.

"Shoot it. Mana String."

Moreover, it was possible for the two of them to share each other's skills and options! It was possible to combine all of them into one attack!

"!?"

Maetel felt the energy gathered inside the longsword change through magic, but she used her instinct to shoot it.

There were black stripes mixed in with the golden light as background. This strange energy impacted on the Huge Slime's body, and it pierced through....

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhng!]

Artpe's will took hold of the attack. The trajectory changed

sharply as the attack drilled deeper into its body once again!

“Hyper Rubbing!”

The attack wasn't at an end yet. The Mana Strings that had manifested around the beam of light were imbued with the option of Hyper Rubbing. The energy within him manifested as friction within, and it was being delivered right into the Slime!

It was a ridiculous composite spell. The method Artpe had used possessed such a high degree of difficulty that it would have made all the other magicians on the continent feel disheartened!

“As expected, a mage is amazing!”

“Artpe was always amazing!”

“C...cool.....”

Of course, everyone gathered in this place were idiots, so the only feedback he received was the fact that it was cool and amazing!

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhng!]

The Huge Slime let out a roar that contained its rage and pain. It finally acquired the power that would enable it to eat all of its enemies. It had been so sure, yet an unexpected attack had been used against it!

It couldn't use its power, because the stones within its body were constantly vibrating. On top of that, an additional attack had been used against it. It was so painful that it was driving it nuts!

[I'll kill you at all cost! I'll kill and eat you! I'll kill you!]

“Are you going to ask the Dungeon for help again? Well, the Dungeon no longer has anything hidden away that it can give you. So what can you do?”

There was a cruel light in Artpe's eyes as he looked at his struggling enemy. The Slime extended its body to hit the wall, and it attempted to eat the weaker members of Artpe's party. However, all of its attempts were thwarted by the Hyper Rubbing.

It was as he said. The Dungeon had given everything it had hidden to the Huge Slime. There were no methods available to the Huge Slime that would allow it to strengthen itself again. Its struggle was wasted. It was all in vain.

“Uh. The purple gem.....”

Leseti found herself to be pathetic, since she was trembling in front of the enemy without putting up any resistance. She tried to right herself when she caught sight of the change that was occurring to the gem within the struggling Huge Slime. The purple light was getting stronger as time passed.

“Ah. As that bastard reached the high rank Class, its ability to dissolve substance also increased by a lot. The Demite’s Gemstone is probably providing it with more power as it become more refined as time passes.”

When Artpe kindly gave an explanation, Leseti’s expression turned more peculiar.

“You... you planned on refining the gem, while attacking your enemy....!?”

“Isn’t it obvious? If I wanted to kill it, I could have killed it with my modified Mana.”

“You.....!”

Artpe had an impudent smile on his face as he replied to her. Leseti grinded her teeth when she saw the annoying smile of the brat. However, she couldn’t deny she was slightly in love with that smile.

After three minutes, the Huge Slime stopped its fruitless struggles. It meekly faced its death.

Chapter 30 – Dungeon, Evolution and Success (4)

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhh!”

“You are doing well, Silpennon. You should roll a little bit to the left. There’s a lot of dusts over there.”

“You evil bastaaaaaaard!”

Silpennon let out a weird groan as he rolled around on the ground. This was a phenomena that occurred when one leveled up all at once.

“His highness barely helped in killing that Slime, so why did he get a share of the EXP?”

Unlike Silpennon, Leseti hadn’t received a single iota of experience. She grinded her teeth as she asked the question. She was jealous of the crown prince, who was rolling around on the ground. He actually looked favorably on the female knight for her sentiment, so he gave a friendly reply.

“Your understanding of this matter is fundamentally wrong. That Slime started eating its brethren, because it feared Silpennon. At that point, Silpennon had pulled the aggro of that Slime, and he probably inflicted some damage too. This is the reason why it counted as Silpennon contributing to the battle.”

“It isn’t much of a contribution!”

Leseti was acting as if she was dissatisfied about Silpennon’s growth. Silpennon bellowed from the ground as he sacrificed his clothes by wiping the dust of the floor.

“Ggoo-ahhhhhh! Your master is leveling up, so why are you complaining!”

“However, your highness, you are useless even if you level up a lot!”

“Did you just say I’m useless.... Ooh-gyahhhhhhh!”

Artpe wondered how the relation between the master and servant would change in the future. However, it was no concern of his.... Artpe let out a sigh as he gave a supplemental explanation.

“It is as you’ve said. The percentage of EXP given to Silpennon wasn’t high. At most, it was around three percent. But.....”

“Are you saying he was able to achieve such an explosive growth with only 3 percent....”

“You’ve hit the nail on the head.”

The only traces of the Huge Slime left behind was the wreckage. It had been a level 200 Dungeon monster, and it was the Dungeon’s boss. It had been a Elite Ultra Rank monster.

Normally, the monster’s record and EXP increased substantially based on Rank and its position. Even if Silpennon had barely contributed, it wasn’t strange to see him increase in level by over 20.

“Moreover, you don’t have to worry too much about his Skills either. We’ll get the [Cud] Bonus too.”

Cud was a humorous term that was coined for the skill where one’s Skill grew once more after the monster was killed. The skill grew under the influence of the monster’s Record, and the achievements in battle. However, Leseti’s expression still indicated that she was having a hard time accepting the situation.

“Still, he didn’t even strike that particular Slime with his sword.....”

“Well, it seems he was able to do so.”

Silpennon was finished with his continuous level up. He shakily got up from the ground. Artpe spoke lightly as he looked over Silpennon with his Read All Creation ability. Above his head, there were words that were more spectacular than what was seen on

Maetel once before.

[Silpennon Le Diaz]

[Level : 49]

[Crown Prince]

[Dual Wield Lv7]

[Battle Step Lv6]

When facing the Slime, it would have been enough to just stab it once. He would have needed to tweak the Slime's body. When the level 200 high rank Class monster was killed, the result of the battle was used on his skills. This was why Silpennon possessed ridiculously high level Skills compared to his actual level.

On top of that, he was so exceptionally talented that there was a bonus added to his skill growth. If one only considered the basic Skill level, Silpennon wasn't that far off from Leseti!

Of course, Artpe wasn't going to breakdown all the information, but it was enough information for Leseti to become shocked and anguished.

"If I knew this would happen, I would have hit it with my sword once!"

"If the monster doesn't become truly threatened by your action, it will have no effect. Silpennon went through his growth, because he attacked the Slime before it evolved."

"Why does the prince always have good luck!"

"Why are you dissatisfied with my luck being good, Leseeeeeeti!"

Leseti kept complaining, and Silpennon gnashed his teeth. At that point, he decided to just drop the subject. However, it seemed Leseti still had questions she wanted to ask of Artpe.

"Does this mean you guys are too high in level to experience level

ups from the Slime's EXP?"

"No, we aren't there yet.... We are just used to this kind of incidents."

"You became accustomed to it!?"

"Mmmm. Could you stand still for a moment.?"

"Kyahhh!?"

Artpe could see his reflection in her large innocent blue eyes, so he activated his Read All Creation ability to check his own info.

[Artpe]

[Hero]

[Level : 163]

[Mana String Lv7]

[Hyper Rubbing Lv24]

[Mana Control Lv35]

[Throw Lv28]

[.....]

"You...you! Do you think I'll fall for you if you do this! You brat! You braaaaat!"

"....why did I promote such a doofus to the role as my knight protector..."

She had suddenly become Artpe's mirror. Leseti's face turned red as she got angry. However, Artpe was deep within his thoughts, so her words didn't really register with. He let go of the angry Leseti, and he wallowed deep in his woes.

'This is way too fast.'

He had graduated from the beginner's Dungeon at level 145. He had fought the knights dressed in black not too long ago, but they were lower in level by dozen levels or more.

However, he had increased by 18 levels in one fell swoop when the Huge Slime was killed. It goes without saying that the Skills used in killing the Slime had grown too.

Even if their opponent was special, this was too much.

As he was thinking this, he turned his thoughts towards the Mana Link and the Record Divide.

‘Did Maetel’s ability perhaps influence me....!?’

If so, that would be the worst! Artpe quickly turned to look at Maetel!

[Maetel]

[Level : 174]

“Good. I worried for nothing.”

She was still growing at a stable yet crazy speed!

“You didn’t worry for nothing. It is rude to stare at another woman like that! Hurry up and apologize to her!”

“What?”

For some reason, Maetel had raised her voice, and she berated Artpe! Both of her cheeks were puffed out, and she stamped towards him. She pulled Artpe towards her side, and she bowed towards Leseti.

“I’m sorry. From now on, I won’t let him get close to you, Ms Leseti. You can be at ease now.”

“Uh. Mmm. Ooh-mmmm..... No, you don’t really have to go that far....”

“Never! I’ll make sure he never gets close to you! I’ll do it even if Ms. Leseti might get hurt a little bit in the process!”

“Why me!?”

Was her Berserk skill still activated!

It seemed Maetel's gaze was so frightening that Leseti hid behind Silpennon. She made him her shield. She was a true specimen of a knight protector.

"Stop going off topic. Anyways, Artpe, some change is occurring over there."

Silpennon was slowly getting a sense of who he should trust, and who he should ignore. He pointed towards the middle of the destroyed plaza of the Dungeon where a light was emanating. He called after Artpe when he saw it. Artpe had a good idea what Silpennon was feeling, so he smirked as he gave a reply.

"Dungeons are a place where one could plunder a lot of goods. This happens when one clears a floor of a Dungeon or when one does a perfect clear. The Dungeon Merchants, who has a contract with the Dungeons, will show up. Their goal is to obtain the goods."

"Is it a form of summoning magic? It really is an advanced form of magic."

While they were conversing, the pillar of light faded away. A woman, who was pretty familiar to Artpe and Maetel, made her appearance.

"Hello, customers! It has only been couple days, yet we meet again!"

"Kek. It's this ajumma again."

"I don't like that ajumma....."

She had smooth brown skin, and the humble clothes of a merchant couldn't hide her bodacious body. Her silver hair shone as if it was emitting light on its own. Then there was her silver eyes. She had slightly elongated, yet sharp eyes. It was none other than the middleman of the Anywhere company, Mycenae.

"I thought you would be bit more happy to see me. What kind of reaction is this? Even I would be hurt a little bit..... Huh? Your

party has grown?”

“You really appeared..... Even the royal family would have a hard time believing such a ridiculous beauty exists, and you have long ears. Are you one of the fabled Elves?”

“Hello, new customer. It is forbidden to inquire about the identity of a Dungeon merchant.”

Mycenae put on her business smile as she replied with a firm voice. Silpennon was a bit frightened by her, so he took couple steps back. At the same time, Artpe supplemented his words with an apathetic voice.

“If you can find out the information without your opponent finding out, it isn’t forbidden. Of course, if you are find out, you will be in big trouble like this ajumma.”

“Koohk. I failed again.....!”

Artpe effortlessly created a Mana String. He swung it, and it shattered the observation magic that was about to used secretly on Silpennon and Leseti. She mumbled to herself as she grinded her teeth.

“I never expected you to be able to sense and interfere with observation magic that wasn’t directed at you..... Still, I was able to learn more about your peerless ability, so I didn’t take a loss!”

“However, you’ll be taking a loss from now on. I want 30% discount.”

“Ooh-goong. Ooh-oong-oohk.”

Mycenae let out a moan that was difficult to decipher. At this point, it was fair to wonder if she enjoyed being taken advantage of by Artpe.

It was as if Silpennon had passed a baton off to Mycenae. She looked as if she wanted to roll around on the floor. Artpe ignored Mycenae. He started looting the Huge Slime with Maetel.

The first thing he picked up was the precious Demite's Gemstone. The Huge Slime's ability was beyond expectation. One could see that some parts of the hard gem were melted.

"Let's see..... Oh."

Artpe poured water over it to wash away the slime. He had a satisfied expression as he looked at the Delmite's Gemstone, which was letting out more light than before. He mumbled to himself.

"If 50 more Huge Slimes shows up, I think I'll be able to refine it."

"You want to create 50 more of this monster!?"

"Unfortunately, it is impossible to do so, so don't be frightened. It is rare to find an opportunity that allows one to easily level up like this."

"Easily....."

It had also regurgitated all the treasures it ate coming down to this floor. It also produced Artifacts and gold coins when the Records and Mana of the Slime was consolidated. When Maetel saw one of the items, she let out a happy shout.

"It's a Skill Book!"

"Unfortunately, the two of us already learned that one."

The Skill Book was called Mana Control. It was a Skill that could be learned after Mana Detection. It was a Skill everyone, who aspired to be a level 100 high rank Class, must learn.

However, it was very difficult to learn it by oneself. It was hard even for those that were born with the potential for becoming a magician. Since the skill can't be self-taught, one had to buy it with money. There were a lot of cases where people gave up on becoming a level 100 high rank Class, because they couldn't acquire the book.

Maetel had learned such a skill at level 2. It really highlighted

how bad of a cheat her talent was. Nothing more had to be said about that subject.

“Since we already learned this Skill, we’ll merely increase our Mana by a little bit if we use it....”

That wasn’t a bad option, but in many ways, it would be best to just sell the Skill Book. The demand for the Mana Control Skill was high, yet there was an absolute shortage in supply. It was the number one in demand amongst the high rank Skills.

Basically, it was expensive. It was very expensive.

“That is why at this point....”

Artpe looked at Silpennon, who was looking at him with an absent minded face. Artpe knew Silpennon had no knowledge of it, yet he asked in a sly manner.

“Do you know what Mana Control is?”

“What is it?”

“I knew it. You should listen carefully.”

Artpe grinned as he made a rough outline of the skill Silpennon had to learn. Artpe even ranked the order in which Silpennon had to learn it!

Of course, the first one on the list was Mana Control.

“You.....”

“I’ll tell you this beforehand, but I’m not lying.”

“You are lying!”

“He said he’s not lying.”

“He isn’t lying, your highness. It is true that even I had to buy and learn Mana Control with money. Most people are weeded out at this point. Of course, I was only able to buy it easily, because I had the backing of the throne.”

Mycenae and Leseti intruded at the right time to back up Artpe’s

words!

Despite their words, Silpennon groaned. He mulled over it before he shook his head from side to side.

“I’ll learned Mana Control through my talent alone! I can do it! I’m someone that’ll go through with what I said!”

“All right. I’ll just sell this then. How much are you will to give me for this, ajumma?”

“I told you I’m not an ajumma! I’ll buy it for 300 gold. Of course, when I resell it, I’ll sell it for over 350 gold!”

“All right. I’m being generous. Three hundred gold will....”

“Wait a moment!”

The retail price jumped 50 gold from the trade price. At that moment, Silpennon yelled out to halt the deal. Artpe and Mycenae grinned at the same time, and they turned to look at him.

“Why? Did you change your mind?”

“I’m in the middle of a negotiation. Could you not interfere, customer?”

It was as if the the times when they growled at each other never existed. When they were trying to screw over someone else, the two of them worked in absolute harmony! Silpennon grinded his teeth as he yelled out his words.

“I’ll kill you all someday! However, I’ll buy that! Since I am one of your party members, I expect a discount!?”

“Of course. I’ll take your contributions into consideration, and I’ll give you a discount. I’ll sell it to you for cheap at the price of 260 gold.”

Artpe smiled as he handed over the Skill Book to Silpennon.

Silpennon took out gold coins from his Dimensional Pouch, and he let out a sigh.

Mycenae felt sympathy for him, but she knew Silpennon had sealed his defeat when he tried to go against Artpe's design.

“Ah. You do realize you have to switch your Class first right? If you are dumb enough to go into any great temple to do it, your identity will be revealed. You should do it by buying a consumable artifact.”

“So how much is that!”

Artpe gave a sign to Mycenae. She had already been anticipating this move. She didn't want to lose out on a sales opportunity, so she quickly yelled out the price.

“It is 300 gold, customer!”

“Ggoo-roo-ooh-ahhhhhhhk!”

This was the moment when the current Crown Prince took a step forward to become the future thief.

Chapter 31 – Dungeon, Evolution and Success (5)

[Silpennon (Le Diaz)]

[Thief]

[Level : 49]

Silpennon purchased the Crystal Ball of Blessing for 300 gold, and he was able to safely choose his new class. There was no funny business like a third hero making an appearance. It was the same as what Artpe had seen in his past life. The path to being a thief was opened to Silpennon.

The Crystal Ball of Blessing was a very expensive and rare artifact. After registering its owner, it could be used several more times. Silpennon could use it to open the path to his high rank Class in the future.

“Ho-ooh. I’m a thief.”

“Koohk. He really is a thief.....”

Inwardly, Artpe had worried another change would occur, but he could relax now.

When the crown prince she had served was turned into a thief, Leseti became forlorn.

“Maybe I should give up on everything. Maybe I should go live in the countryside, and feed cows.....”

“Do you think running a dairy farm is easy? The Demon King may overlook such arrogance, but I won’t overlook it!”

“What do you think running a dairy farm involves! What type of fantasy are you caught up in!?”

Silpennon was the only one in a peaceful state amongst all of them.

“What is wrong with being a thief? I don’t feel too bad about it.”

Crown prince was a position that allowed him to possess absolute authority, but at the same time, it was a shackle that he couldn’t escape from. When his father the king was killed, he had run away from his uncle’s evil influence, and he had reached this point. Silpennon kind of liked the view of the world from where he stood right now.

“I’m not in a position where I’m completely happy situation, but..... Yes, I’m Silpennon the thief now. Hoo. It isn’t too bad. Moreover, I had always yearned to get out of my birdcage. It feels as if I’ve taken I’ve grabbed freedom by the hand.”

Silpennon kept smiling as he observed good manners towards Artpe again.

“If it wasn’t for you, I don’t know what would have happened to me. The fact that I followed after you might be the best decision I’ve made in my life. Thank you, Artpe.”

“The hard part will start from now on. If you thank me so early, I’ll feel guilty.”

“You really are the type of person that can’t accept a thanks without making a fuss..”

All Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon King’s army were like that. If they were transparent about their feelings, they would meet their end before they could even start. Ah, this also made it hard for them to return feelings of others.

“Huh? Silpennon, Silpennon.....”

At that moment, Mycenae suddenly tilted her head in puzzlement as she looked at them. The name made her think of a hot issue right now. It happened when she was having this thought.

Silpennon didn’t hesitate. He nodded his head.

“That’s right. I used to be the crown prince of Diaz.”

“Your highness, you shouldn’t tell her that!”

Did he decide it was information that he didn’t need to hide? Or was he just too young? Of course, a Dungeon Merchant didn’t go around blabbing about information regarding a customer. Still, it wasn’t wise to reveal such information unnecessarily.

However, Silpennon was already well aware of this fact. He wasn’t an idiot.

“However, I’m not anymore.”

Silpennon looked back with a refreshed expression on his face. He wanted to accept his current self, so he planned on making a clean break from his past.

“So stop call me by that title, Leseti. I’m only a level 49 thief Silpennon now. I plan on burying my position as the crown prince in the darkness until we defeat the Demon King. That is why I don’t care, who finds out about it. No one will be able to find the crown prince Silpennon.”

Mycenae’s eyes became round.

“Oh my. So that’s how it is. Somehow, I did feel an air of nobility coming from you. Wait a second. Did my little customers already have a connection to the throne.....”

As her imaginations started to stretch far and wide, Artpe extended his finger to wrap the end of the Mana String into a ball. He tapped it against Mycenae’s smooth forehead.

“Ah-yaht!”

“If you act so clingy, you won’t be popular with men, ajumma.”

“KooH.... Whatever you may take me for, before I became a merchant, men lined up just to be able to catch my eyes! There were enough of them to encircle the central square ten times! Customer, you are the only one that doesn’t recognize my charm! This is the problem with kids!”

Artpe completely ignored Mycenae's grumblings as he gathered all the loot.

It was hard to express this in words. It was merely a Slime Dungeon, yet the items and rewards gathered there was too amazing. Of course, a part of the reason was the fact that they were the first to discover this Dungeon. Moreover, all the secret locations had been revealed. On top of that, the artifacts were all gathered in a single place by the Huge Slime. It all came out from its body.

The items that possessed weak magical energy was dissolved into pure magical energy within the Huge Slime. The magical energy either strengthened the Huge Slime or it strengthened the other items.

Of course, the remaining items would go up in value.

"There's a lot this time around. Did you completely clean out the whole Dungeon?"

"Yes. It is as you say. Let's see..... I want 653 gold for all the minor items. Call?"

"Mmm... Call."

"All right."

Both sides already knew that the other was a master. This was why the transaction between Artpe and Mycenae didn't take long.

Of course, the worth of the items was assessed and the transaction ended. It happened way too fast. The rest of the party looked on in disbelief. They looked at Artpe and Mycanae as if they were some kind of monsters.

Artpe handed over all the loot to Mycenae, but he held back several artifacts. It was time for them to earnestly evaluate the worth of the artifacts. Mycenae gulped.

"In truth, the items I really want you to sell me are those....."

“Let me think about it.”

In truth, Artpe had wished for more Skill Books to come out, but it ended at the Mana Control. Even the common Fire Magic Spell Book hadn't dropped. Instead, there were rare items that were as rare as the Huge Slime.

“Let's talk about this potion first.”

[Slime Potion]

[All forms of liquid will be made into slime. If someone with low resistance to Mana drinks it, one will die immediately as one's blood would be turned into slime. It is a very rare and foul substance. It doesn't emit hostile Mana, so it is perfect to use for assassination. Only a Slime that has evolved to the extreme may produce it at a low probability. This item has almost never been seen before within history.]

“.....mmmm?”

“What is that potion, customer? What is it? It is bothering me!”

“This.... I'll keep it for now.”

He had no idea where he should use this. However, strange and useless items like this usually helped out at crucial moments.

“Aht. You should give me an explanation on what it is.... Ooh-eeeeee”

Mycenae's cheeks puffed out when Artpe put away the potion without giving an explanation. Of course, he wasn't into older women, so he ignored the rest of her words. He took out the second loot.

It looked as if it was an item that was crafted by using a part of the Huge Slime's body. It was a longbow that didn't look too sturdy.

[Flexible Hunter's Bow]

[The shape will change depending on the user's objective. It can

change from a short bow to a ballista. Mana will be consumed to make a Mana Arrow. Its power will depend on the user's Archery level. Users without Archery level of 100 cannot use it. It is possible to increase durability of the item by injecting Mana.]

After he checked the information regarding the Artifact, Artpe couldn't hold back his words. He tackled the issue that was bothering him.

“Ballista should not be classified as a bow!?”

“Pull yourself together, customer! That isn't a ballista. It is a longbow!?”

Artpe activated his Read All Creation ability again, and he checked each component of the bow. He injected some of his power to check if the bow could change into a short bow and a ballista.

Of course, the requirement to use the bow was to be an archer of high rank Class, but Artpe was a hero. He could easily brush aside such restrictions.

“Huhk. It really is a ballista!?”

“This is better than expected.....”

Artpe ignored the shocked Mycenae. He calmly retreated. He turned around to look at Maetel, and he asked her a question.

“Do you have any thoughts about using a bow, Maetel?”

“It looks fun to use, but I'm not confident that I can handle anything that isn't a club or a sword. That is why I don't want it.”

“You made a good decision.”

She was talented enough to pick up any weapon, and she would be able to use it well enough to be comparable to the people of the same Class. However, if she learned too many things, she might regret it someday. She was most suited to close combat. She should focus on what she was best at.

“Customer, I will.....”

“I want 1,650 gold. Do you want to buy it?”

“Ooh-mmmmm. If I can find the proper owner, I’m confident I can charge twice that price, but.....”

“You do know there is a scarce supply of this type of artifacts in the world, right?”

Artpe had a fair point. It was a bow that could change form to fit the situation!

It can be used from short range to very long distance. Moreover, there was no need to carry around arrows, and the durability could be recovered. If Artpe was an archer, he would have kept it. It would have been a no brainer.

“A right owner.... A right owner....”

Mycenae thought over it for a very long time. This was a huge transaction, so she would have to invest a lot into this venture. This was why she was a bit hesitant. Artpe coaxed her to allay her concerns.

“I have to buy a lot from you this time around.”

“.....hoo-ooh. I’ll buy it for 1650 gold.”

This was how over 1,500 gold was exchanged in a single transaction. Silpennon was a crown prince of a nation, yet even his mouth fell open at the sight.

“Are adventurers the type of occupation where one makes a lucrative amount of money?”

“Of course, if all adventurers could find a jackpot of a Dungeon like these little customers, they could earn as much. Unfortunately, 70% of all adventurers fail to find anything. Then about 20% of the adventurers covet the treasures, but they retreat when faced with danger. Nine percent of the adventurers bravely charge forward and they are killed.”

“So that means only 1% of them are able to get what they want?”

“Moreover, if the 1% challenges another Dungeon, they’ll be back in the roulette with 1% chance of succeeding.”

Opportunity always come hand in hand with risk. However, one shouldn’t be delusional about the order in which it was faced. If opportunity exists within danger, the idiots always died first.

“... I will take those words to heart.”

“Well, if one observe these customers, it does make one wonder if those statistics are wrong!”

After Mycenae delivered the warning with a serious voice, she undercut her own words as she turned around. She looked at the last loot left behind by the Huge Slime..

“The last thing left is the chest plate. Its durability and Mana reaction seems to be uncommon.....”

However, before the sensor for Mycenae’s worldly desires could activate, Artpe handed the armor to Maetel.

“Maetel.”

“Yes, thank you!”

“Why don’t you two just hurry up and marry?!”

It was called a Blast Plate. It was an armor that only protected the body from the front.

It had a red sheen, and at a glance, one could tell it was something extraordinary. It had the option of protecting its owner from a critical blow, and a fixed amount of Mana was consumed to blunt the effects of an attack. The options were perfect for a defensive gear.

The cherry on top was that it had a similar option to the Bone Gauntlet. It could raise the user’s strength by detecting its owner’s emotions. It was the perfect armor for Maetel, who used Berserk. Since it had an emotion type buff on it, it was the emotion felt by

the Huge Slime right before it perished. However, such information could be omitted.

“Hue hue. The red light is too pretty.”

“Ah. I think there are more customers that will look for that instead of the bow.....”

Maetel was happy, and Mycenae was wistful. Leseti, who didn't have any claims to the artifact, could only look on as she smacked her lips.

It was as if he didn't care what they were feeling. Artpe suddenly sat on the floor, and his eyes let out a harsh light. It was as if the main fight was yet to come! That was what his expression indicated.

“Sit next to me, Maetel.”

“Yes!”

Maetel, who didn't know what was going on, sat next to Artpe, and her eyes shone too. The bizarreness of the situation doubled.

Artpe spoke in a solemn manner towards the puzzled Mycenae.

“I told you I have a lot to buy this time around, ajumma.”

“I'm not an ajumma. However, you clearly did say that.”

“Hoo.....”

Artpe shut his eyes tight. There were a lot of thoughts going through his head as he was about to spend an enormous amount of money.

Should he do it right now? Should he? He needed money for many things in the future, so should he make such an expenditure at this point in time?

However, he didn't know when he'll be able to see the Dungeon Merchant again. It would be hard to find a suitable location such as this.....

“All right.”

“I’ll be embarrassing if you suddenly confess to me.”

Artpe replied to Mycenae’s remark, which had been made in humor.

“I want you to give me all the Skill Books that can be learned by a level 150 Warrior and a level 150 Magician.”

“.....”

Chapter 32 – Dungeon, Evolution and Success (6)

In truth, Artpe wanted to purchase all the close combat Skill Books and Spell Books affiliated with the magician Class.

If he did that, he would basically reveal to everyone that Artpe and Maetel were heroes. Moreover, he didn't have enough money to purchase all of them. Currently, this was the best Artpe could do.

“Ooh-wah. You are doing something only a noble family would do.”

Yet it was enough to make Mycenae feel overwhelmed. She searched through her cargo to bring out all the Skill Books and Spell Books she possessed. She couldn't hold back her bitter laughter. Artpe appraised each one of them, and he explained to Maetel on the use of these books.

“This is one of the psychotic things that monsters, beings from other races and humans fight each other for. It is something they do in an attempt to live a little bit longer. This is the most legal and safe form of doping. It is one of the very few cheat keys allowed in this world. There is only one thing we have to give up in return.”

Artpe grinned as gold coins poured out of the pouch held out by Mycenae.

“Money.”

“If one's ability is lacking, this strategy won't work. A sloppily-learned skill would only lead to tears later... Well, I'm pretty sure you guys will be fine.”

Mycenae hadn't seen them fight, but she had a decent idea on how talented they were. They had the luck of finding great rewards in any Dungeon they went to. Even if one put aside their luck, they were unperturbed after doing a full clear of the

Dungeon. Just this fact was very telling.

“Still, haven’t you learned most of the basic Skills? This means your Stats will go up slightly. You won’t benefit much from them.”

“This allows one to buy one’s life with money…….”

“Yes. Yes. The fact that you treasure your life is a very admirable trait.”

The Skill Books were expensive. The most basic and useless ones were worth several dozen silvers. A basic Skill Book was around 1 gold, so one could only imagine how expensive a Skill Book would be if it was useful in battle. Maetel counted the Skill Books as they were handed over to Artpe.

“Only 14……. Moreover, I’ve already learned 8 of them! So how much are these, Artpe?”

“It’s 619 gold. Of course, there are some that are only worth couple golds, but there are also ones that are worth several dozen golds. Normally a Skill Book jumps several dozen times in value if it becomes known that it is a bit useful.”

“A book costs several dozen gold!”

“Didn’t you just hear that Mana Control was worth 350 gold?”

Maetel really didn’t like the fact that she would have to learn a Skill Book when she already knew the Skill. She would be doing such an act in an attempt to marginally grow her Stats. However, Artpe had provided all of this with her in thought, so she couldn’t just spurn the gesture. She had no choice, but to learn it all.

“Hoo-ooooh…….”

“As expected, you aren’t an ordinary talent. You were able to learn and get used to the Skills in an instant....”

“For the love of god, you are using those expensive Skill Books in one sitting!”

“That’s the part that surprises you, Leseti?”

There was an upside in learning all the Skills at once. Each of Maetel's stamina, agility and strength rose by 10. Normally, one's Stat rose by three in total when a warrior leveled up. This meant she had gained Stats equivalent to increasing 10 levels.

Of course, a level up didn't only give Stats, so it was impossible to do a one on one comparison. Still, if one was in a situation where one's death was assured, a difference in 30 Stat points might be enough to allow one to survive the situation. Moreover, if it was Maetel, she would be much more efficient in using the increase in Stats.

"So this is how adventurers arm themselves."

"I told you it isn't like that. There aren't that many adventurers, who are blessed with such an environment!"

"Koohk. If I had that much support, I would be stronger....."

"Leseti, it must have been hard on you....."

Anyways, the purchase of the Skill Books ended without any hitch.

The problem was the Spell Books.

"There are only 9 Spell Books!? Artpe, this is a scam!"

"All of them combined is worth 608 gold? Still, you were able to prepare quite a lot of them for me."

"As expected, you know your stuff!"

The Skill Book prices looked inflated, but the pricing was weak compared to the Spell Books. There were only a very small number of magic type Classes in existence. Naturally, the number of spell books were proportionately low in number. There weren't a lot of them out there.

This was why it wasn't easy to purchase a spell he wanted. The limitation of the supply was hard to overcome. It was as Artpe had said. It was almost a miracle that Mycenae possessed so many Spell

Books.

“You should feel fortunate in the fact that you were able to meet me. Even most magician towers don’t release this amount of material.”

“Half of these magic are for everyday chores, so stop trying to stump for yourself.”

Artpe snorted as he learned the Spells at once. These were spells useful for everyday life, and it was considered to be on the lower rung in terms of difficulty. Still, it normally took several tries to learn it. However, Artpe was the possessor of the Read All Creation ability. He could learn the Spell Books just by holding it in his hand.

“Ho-ooh. It rose around 23 magical energy.....? That’s not too bad.”

The value highlighted the fact that Hyper Rubbing was a high rank magic spell. When Artpe learned Hyper Rubbing, his magical energy went up by 20. He had learned nine magic spells, yet his magic energy rose by 23!

“You are understating it by saying it wasn’t too bad! Do you realize how monstrous of a feat you just accomplished!?”

“Hoong. If I didn’t have the ability to back it up, why would I ask for all your Spell Books?”

Artpe finished the task as if it was nothing, but Mycenae, who was watching the sight, couldn’t hide her shock. When one learned many magic spells at one, the theory behind the magic spells clashed, and there was a chance one might become a vegetable! So how was he able to do so!

This wasn’t something that could be done, because one was good at controlling Mana. One needed an incredible amount of memorization and computation skills to achieve what he had accomplished!

“Customer.”

Mycenae extended her hands. They moved like lightning as she grabbed one of Artpe’s hand. Her eyes shone. Maetel growled from behind, but Mycenae didn’t pay attention to her. She spoke with sincerity as she tried to convince him.

“Do you have any desire to use your talent in the marketplace!?”

“Nope.”

“Chet.”

After Artpe firmly rebuffed Mycenae’s entreaty, he put his mind into motion. He had spent around 1,200 gold in purchasing the Skills and Spells. In truth, he had prepared himself to spend up to 2,000 gold, so he had a good amount of money left.

He thought about purchasing more potions, yet they still had plenty of consumables. Next, he thought about equipment, but they didn’t really need a particular piece of equipment right now.

“Mmm..... Ughh.”

Artpe thought a little bit more on it. Then he asked a question to Mycenae with a slightly lowered voice.

“Do you have artifacts that can hinder perception? If possible, I want you to give me a good one.”

“Hoooooog?”

Mycenae’s expression turned sly. She didn’t ask any further questions. She just took out two rings. They weren’t fancy. The two rings looked to be made out of discolored gold. She held the rings out in her hand, and she had a triumphant expression on her face.

“As it happen, I have two highest quality artifacts left! It is in the form of a ring so it is easy to hide, and its outward appearance can go through minor changes. Moreover, these were made by a high rank magician, so there’s no way you’ll be detected by anyone

under level 250.....”

“All right. I’ll buy it for 500 gold each. What do you say to 1,000 gold?”

“You aren’t allowing me the opportunity to barter.”

Artpe put one of the rings worth 500 gold on his finger. He gave the other one to Maetel.

“I’ll tell you how to use the artifact later. Just put it on for now.”

“F...five hundred gold... For 500 gold.... How many cows is that? I don’t know!”

Maetel was in a deep state of turmoil, but in the end, she put on the ring. She wrapped her hand around the finger with the ring on it as if it was something to be treasured. Her cheeks had turned red. It was clear that she had mistook the gesture for something else. However, nothing bad would come from her treasuring the ring. Artpe smirked as he turned his head....

“I want two artifacts that hinder the perception of others! Give it to me!”

Even if he threw away his rank as the crown prince, he couldn’t lose his face. Silpennon clung to Mycenae as if he had found a road to his salvation.

As expected, the guy was pretty smart. Silpennon was in the same situation as Artpe and Maetel where he had to hide his existence by using the item to avoid detection.

“But, your highness..... No, that isn’t right. Silpennon-nim, the woman clearly said that those were her last two.....”

“I don’t care if it doesn’t perform as well! You must have others!”

“Uh, oh my! Come to think of it, I have exactly two more left!”

“.....”

The party members stared at her with cold gazes. Mycenae acted

shameless by whistling under their cold gazes. This was called iron face in the vocabulary of the merchants. It was clear that she was a master of this highest rank technique As expected of a veteran merchant!

“Hoo. Just give it to me.”

If that was how merchants had to act, he never wanted to become a merchant. Silpennon took out a thousand gold. The money he brought out from the palace wasn't unlimited. Still, he couldn't skimp on money when it came to preserving his own life.

“You won't regret this trade!”

“Do you perhaps have 11 of the same item still left in your possession?”

“The part about its efficacy was real. You can trust me on that part. Ooh-cha.”

Artpe let out a sigh as he got up.

He sold what he had to sell, and he bought what he had purchase. The trade was done.

However, there was still a deal to be made for the others.

“Ajumma, I have work where you'll have to travel.”

“Oh my. Are you asking me out on a date? In truth, it isn't as if I don't like you, but you should make the request after growing up for five years, at the very least.”

“As part of your job as a merchant, don't you offer a service to teach beginner adventurers? I want you to teach them about the basic common sense of being an adventurer.”

Silpennon and Leseti had been divvying up the rings amongst themselves, and they hadn't expected the spark to fly towards them. They blinked their eyes. A lesson for beginner adventurers? Such a thing existed?

“You completely ignored my words! Kook.... All right. I'll do it!”

Mycenae acted as if she had been humiliated, but she quickly transitioned into her business mode. In such a situation, her battle capability and bargaining power increased by 20%! She patted her ample breast as she boasted about herself.

“You already know this, right? I’m a veteran trader. Normally, I don’t take on such simple jobs. This should be obvious, but my pay is pretty high.”

“However, you will apply a proper 30% discount there, right?”

“Koohk!”

She knew she couldn’t win against him, yet she stalled for time. She had a personality befitting the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Artpe thought Mycenae would have done well as one of the Four Heavenly Kings instead of being a merchant.

Artpe spoke to Silpennon.

“Since I’ve helped you up to this point, the rest is up to you now. Originally, I brought you guys to the Dungeon with the intention of letting you guys meet the Dungeon Merchant. It is good for beginner adventurers like you guys to have a good rapport with the Dungeon Merchants.”

“If we go by age, you guys could be considered beginner adventurers.....”

Silpennon was dismayed, so he mumbled those words to himself. Still, he intended to take full advantage of the stage provided by Artpe. Since Artpe insisted on this, he’ll acquire all the information he could from the Dungeon Merchant!

“Ughh. The price changes depending on time. However, if a 30% discount is applied again.....”

“It is time for us to go.”

“Yes!”

“What!?”

Silepennon and Leseti were on their best behavior as they were about to get ready for the lesson. They turned to look at Artpe in surprise.

“Are you going to abandon us?!”

“It is as I’ve promised. We finished the Dungeon together. I increased your level and skills. I’ve even arranged for you to receive an education as an adventurer. What more do you want?”

“B...but.....”

Silpennon and Lesti stared at Artpe. Both their eyes shook. They looked at him as if he was a lover that was leaving them, and in truth, he did feel a little bit bad about this.

“I want to repay my debts, yet I won’t have any way to find you in the future.”

“When S...Silpennon-nim passes away, I planned on putting myself in your care! Are you trying to make me a wandering knight?”

“What the hell? Who’s going to pass away?”

The man and woman fought as if their relationship as master and servant would end soon. Mycenae stared at Artpe as she spoke in a small voice.

“You must love it since you are so popular, customer.”

“You are being noisy. Shut up. Just sell me the communication device.”

“You really provided everything for them even as you gripe. You are so cute that I can’t help myself! Fifty eight gol…….”

“If we apply the 30% discount, it will be 40 gold, right?”

“Goo-ooooooooohk!”

One’s intentions didn’t matter. It was also the fate of the hero to be blindly loved by the people around him. Artpe was still unaware

of this fact.

Chapter 33 – Come to Think of It, I’m a Hero

(1)

Artpe and Maetel left the three people behind as they exited the Dungeon. Of course, he wasn’t able to completely shed his worry about Silpennon’s future. However, if Silpennon died after he did this much for him, it was just fate!

“So, Artpe, where are we headed now?”

“Originally, I wanted us to go into some decent Dungeons to grow our levels, but.....”

They had entered the Dungeon to grow Silpennon to a respectable level. However, a Huge Slime had appeared, and it allowed Artpe to become level 163. Maetel had grown to level 174. He hadn’t intended for this, yet their levels had increased explosively. They didn’t really intend for this to happen, yet they had experienced a tempest of growth. They really didn’t need to go searching for a different Dungeon as of now. As expected, the power of a hero was amazing!

Somehow, Maetel looked wistful at his words.

“So we aren’t going to any more Dungeons? I thought the Dungeons were really fun. I love becoming stronger!”

Even if she wasn’t a hero, he surmised she would have become the strongest in the world no matter what her Class was. While he had this distant thought, he soon let out a bitter laugh as he consoled her.

“There will come a day when you’ll have to basically live inside Dungeons even if you don’t want to. That is why you should be patient for now. At the very least, we won’t be pushed around at this level.”

In the demon world, it was hard for beings under level 200 to strut around in the Demon world, but they were in the human

world. The grand master of this kingdom had barely exceeded level 200, yet the world praised his name. No one will be able to restrain them in such a world.

On top of that, they possessed the Record Link, and Maetel's various skills had grown significantly. If the specialness of being a hero was added, he wondered if any being under level 200 would be able to face her.

In a world where level was the absolute indicator of one's strength, the fact that she could jump over this demarcation was an amazing talent.

"However, if we meet anyone above that level, we have to run away. The high rank Class over level 200 differ in quality."

"Wasn't the Slime we just caught over level 200?"

"That one is an exception. It is like the weakest amongst the four Heavenly Kings. He is frequently excluded from being listed amongst the ranks of the strongest beings."

It didn't matter how far it had evolved. In the end, the Slime suffered an ignominious death even after it ate all the Mana in its vicinity to become huge.

This was the reason why Artpe had been relaxed even as the Slime ate an entire Dungeon. It wouldn't have mattered if it evolved using 10 or 100 floors. He would have left it alone. He would have considered it a great opportunity to completely refine the Demite's Gemstone.

"As expected, Artpe is amazing?"

"You always come to that conclusion."

"Hoo-hoo-hoong."

It looked as if Maetel was very happy that she was alone with Artpe again.

Artpe was slowly getting used to her endless affection and

skinship. However, he worried she would get sick of him some day. A person's feeling was one of the most powerful motivators, but emotions were temporary and fickle. It wasn't something that was easy to deal with.

'It isn't as if I want to detain the hero. However, if she stops following my directions before we kill the Demon King, it'll be a problem. Maybe, I can use Charm magic.... No, that plan is impossible if her resistance to Mana is put into consideration.... Tsk. Yes, I have to admit it to myself. I wouldn't like myself if I did that to her.'

He tried hard to think like the bad guy, but in the end, he let out a sigh. Yes, he really hated messing with another being's free will. From the time he was enslaved by the Demon King, he had suffered under the same treatment. He knew how shitty something like that was.

What if he did that to a hero? Even if god could forgive him, Artpe wouldn't be able to forgive himself.

'Moreover, if I am to be a little bit more honest with myself, I.....'

Artpe had been trying very hard not to have these thoughts until now, yet he attempted to confront his inner feelings.... His face suddenly turned red, and he stopped that train of thought.

When he stopped the thought process, the scene from his past life flashed through his mind. It was the sight of the dependable and pure hero's face, who had faced him in front of the Demon King's castle.

".....Artpe, what's wrong? Are you in pain?"

"Nope. It's nothing. Hey, your face is too close. Move it. Hey."

"I don't want to! I want to hold your hand!"

Her timing was uncanny as she pushed her face towards Artpe. Artpe was startled, so he tried to push her away. However, there was no way Artpe could win in terms of strength.

In the end, Artpe had to do what Maetel wanted. She gained ownership of Artpe's arm. She energetically swung their arms as if they were little children going on a picnic.

"I really love the fact that we are walking together! Just the two of us!"

"You be sick of it soon."

"I'll never be sick of it. Not even in a thousand years!"

"The scale you think in is like that of a dragon"

In the end, Artpe had to laugh at Maetel's innocent reply.

Then he spoke to her in a kind voice.

"Let's go recruit a new member for the hero's party."

"Eeeesh-eeeeng!"

As soon as she expressed her pleasure at being alone with him, Artpe immediately declared his intention of adding a new member! This savagery was an aspect that was befitting one of Four Heavenly Kings of the Demon King's army!

In his past life, the Diaz Kingdom had been held together quite easily. It wasn't as if there wasn't a rebellion caused by the Archduke, but the hero was able to suppress it easily.

Diaz had been peaceful thanks to the hero, and they were able to prosper. This was all before the full-out war with the Demon King's army had started.

'However, it isn't like that anymore.'

Artpe sighed when they arrived at the first town, since they had left the Slime Dungeon. The town was quite dreary. Maetel, who had expected a bustle of people, was taken aback at the frozen atmosphere of the town.

"What's wrong with this place, Artpe?"

"It is said that when a ruler clears his throat, the citizens would

suffer. With that in mind, the country just went through a change in ownership. Of course, the whole country will be in tumult.”

In some ways, this was the biggest change that had occurred, because of Artpe. If Artpe hadn't run away with the hero, this rebellion would have never occurred.

If the agitated Maetel, who was next to Artpe, was still inside the castle, the humans that sought to satisfy their own selfish interests and desires wouldn't have been able to take control.

Still, it was as Silpennon had said. This occurred because of the internal politics of the kingdom. This wasn't Maetel's fault. Of course, Artpe wasn't at fault either. This was why they didn't need to feel any guilt.

‘Still, this does annoy me a little bit.’

Artpe let out a sigh as he looked at Maetel, who looked a bit sad. He placed a hand atop her head.

“We shouldn't worry ourselves over all of this. We just have to do what is within our power, and we have to defeat our final foe, the Demon King.”

“Will everyone become happy when we defeat the Demon King?”

In the old tales, the world became peaceful when the hero defeated the Demon King. Of course, these were only old tales. Artpe's view was grounded in reality.

“No. However, if the Demon world loses its leader, people will rush towards the Demon world to conquer it. For a brief time, there would be a need for manpower, and even civilians with no abilities would have a chance to get their hands on a good amount of loot. Of course, it also depends on the ability of humans to defend their newly found peace.”

“The Demon world.....? What about the Demons in the Demon world?”

She was astute in the questions she asked. For an instant, Artpe thought about his previous life where the Demon King had subjugated their entire Demon race. He thought about himself..... In the end, he shook his head from side to side.

“You don’t have to worry about the Demon race. We just have to kill them all.”

“Everyone said that Demons are bad, but..... There are bad people amongst humans, so wouldn’t there also be kind Demons in the Demon race?”

“.....”

Artpe shut his mouth at the unexpected question. Her eyes did not falter. She stared at Artpe with sincere eyes. This was why he was hesitant to give her a rash answer.

“That’s.....”

In the human world, everyone grew up being educated that ‘Humans are good and the Demons are bad.’

The power of indoctrination was scary. Even those that were learned and experienced in the world held absolute hostility towards the Demon race.

‘However, she came to hate the humans first.’

To be precise, the humans that tried to kill Artpe, and it was apt to say that her faucet was turned the wrong way. Afterwards, Maetel was able to willingly swing her sword against humans.

In truth, Artpe had worried a lot about this fact. He worried her nature would move closer to being that of a Berserker.

However, he just learned that he was the standard she was using to determine what was good and what was bad. This was why he decided not to interfere in determining what was right and wrong for her. He wouldn’t do so even if the topic was about humans and the Demons.

‘I wonder if she’ll start to hesitate when killing monsters in the future.’

In the end, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he lightly patted her head.

She was still only 13 years old. This was a question where even Artpe hadn’t been able to come up with an answer. Nothing good will come from her worrying over such a question.

“I already told you the standard of judgement you should use. You do what you think is right. That is all there is to it. Don’t try to take on too big of a problem. You should deal with what is immediately in front of you, and it will all work out in the future”

“……yes, all right. For now, I want to do what you want to do.”

Artpe’s answer was a non-answer. However, she didn’t want to admit to herself that Artpe was lacking in any aspect. This was why she decided to accept what Artpe said as an absolute truth.

She decided to pretend that it was enough.

“But... But what if Artpe……”

However, there was one question remaining that she needed answered.

“What happens if the Demon King is one the the good demons?”

“Ah, you don’t have to worry about that.”

Fortunately, this was a question where he could give a definite answer. Artpe’s eyes narrowed as he spoke in a firm manner.

“If the Demon king is considered to be kind, that would mean no evil would exist in this world.”

“I understand. I’ll trust you, Artpe!”

This was how the Q&A session between the two heroes ended. He was sure a day would come when he would come across this question again, but this was enough for now.

The two had a serious conversation that was unbefitting of young kids as they entered the town. Sure enough, the town was being searched by soldiers sent by the palace.

“Have you seen him before! He’s a youth with red hair! Red hair!”

“We are looking for a black haired brat, and a blonde haired girl. Are you perhaps hiding them in your home? Huh?”

Rough looking soldiers were searching each house. There was a reason why the town wasn’t lively at all.

The soldiers weren’t just searching for the crown prince. They were also trying to find the missing heroes from a year ago. When she realized this fact, Maetel was a bit frightened. She stuck close to Artpe, but he was completely relaxed.

“The artifact that obstruct recognition is working perfectly, so we’ll be fine.”

“Still, I’m worried.....”

The two of them were using artifacts that obstructed recognition, so it looked as if they possessed brown hair and dark brown eyes. These were the most common color amongst the population, and they looked very average. If they were still detained even though they weren’t heroes, they could just kill that person on the grounds that he was a pedophile.

“Hey, you guys over there! Come here and show me your faces!”

“Of course, there are occasionally bastards like him.....”

There were people, who became violent, when they were placed in a position of power. It wasn’t just about one’s voice becoming louder. This was especially true when faced with young children, who looked weak.

“What did you say?”

Of course, the solution was simple. He just had to put them in

their place.

“Hee...heek.”

Artpe took off his robe to reveal his changed brown hair, then he floated two fireballs into the air. The overbearing soldier, who had been shouting towards them, froze in place.

“You are being too noisy. I don’t care who you are looking for. Shut up. You should go on about quietly. All right?”

“A m...mage.....!”

The soldier couldn’t reply properly. His gaze was firmly planted on the fireballs, which were moving around freely based on the gesture of Artpe’s hand. The nearby soldiers had already retreated.

“Hey. Aren’t you going to answer me?”

When Artpe glared as he moved the fireballs, the soldier finally bowed his head in surprise.

“I....I’m sorry, mage!”

“If you feel that way then get the hell out of my sight. From this moment on, if I see any of you, you won’t need a hearth to feel warm ever again.”

“Yes. Yes, sir!”

The one that gave the answer as well as the demoralized soldiers exited the town at once. It was as if there was a flash flood. Artpe gave a light laugh as he turned to look at Maetel.

“You just have to simply show them your power against idiots like them. This is the easiest way to resolve the problem for both sides, so you should remember this.”

“Oooh. Artpe is too cool.....!”

There were stars in Maetel’s eyes.

Mmm. It seemed Artpe’s message hadn’t taken hold at all.

“What’s so cool about such a cheap threat?”

“I said Artpe looked cool, because you looked cool. I just said what I thought!”

“Yes. Yes. I was the foolish one.”

Artpe let out a sigh as he turned around. Since he chased the annoying flies away, he had to acquire a place to stay for the night.

Artpe only realized afterwards that he had made a mistake in his calculations.

“Heek ”

“H...hide!”

“Should we run away?”

“P... please spare me!”

“.....”

It seemed the townspeople had become frightened alongside the soldiers. No one wanted to open their doors to the party with the scary magician.

“Ah.....”

It took them 30 minutes. Artpe was barely able to book a room at the inn. As he was served soup, he decided not to use magic in front of the civilians if he could help it.

“We’ll be on a tight schedule starting tomorrow. We won’t be resting until we get to our destination, so you should be prepared for it.”

“When you say a comrade, who are you trying to find?”

“That is.....”

The hero from his past life had undergone countless trial and error to find her companions. She started off with a thief, then she joined forces with a warrior, archer and a priestess.....

However, there was a problem with the party’s firepower. Aside from the priestess, all the members of the hero’s party were

powerful beings that had the power of hundred to a thousand men. Yet they weren't talented enough to turn the tide of a battle by themselves. They were only deployed in situations where a small elite force was effective.

However, the situation had completely changed when a magician joined the hero's party. The magician possessed such brilliant talent that she was considered second only to the hero! The magician's ability was so great that the achievement of the hero's party was separated depending on what happened before and after the magician joined the party.

Since Artpe had the knowledge about his previous life, his choice was obvious.

"We are going to find a mage"

Artpe didn't care if their positions overlapped. Not, this was actually better! If a magician joined the party early, he could develop her. If he did a good job, maybe he could end all of this, while not having to enter the battlefield!

"I just need Artpe....."

Maetel grumbled as if she still didn't like the idea, but he ignored her.

At this point in time, he already knew where he could find the magician.

They just have to go see her now!

At that moment, someone knocked on the door to their room.

"E...excuse me. May I bother you for a brief moment....?"

A thin and high voice of a girl was heard. Maetel answered yes, and she didn't hesitate to answer the door. When the door was opened, a very plain looking girl was standing there. She looked like the Village Girl A that could be found in any town.

"Uh..... Ah....."

When Artpe caught sight of her, he immediately activate his Read All Creation ability.

At that moment, Artpe finally realized something.

The job as a hero had just started.

Chapter 34 – Come to Think of It, I’m a Hero

(2)

“M...my name is Aena.”

“That’s enough with your self-introduction.”

Artpe stopped his face from crumpling when he saw the face of the girl. He brushed aside her words.

“I want you to tell me your request, and what you will be able to give me. Keep it short.”

“.....”

It was said from the olden times that it was crucial to clear a Quest as soon as possible! He just needed to know the content of the Quest and the reward. He didn’t care about minor details like her situation.

“Heek.”

“Artpe.....”

The girl, who came looking for them, and Maetel, who had been looking at Aena, turned to look at Artpe with dumbfounded expressions when they heard his words. Aena was barely able to open her mouth before Artpe’s expression could crumple.

“I...in truth, the soldiers came to our town couple days ago. He was captured by them, and he hasn’t been returned.....”

“All right. What’s the reward?”

“.....”

He even skipped the content of the Quest! If others heard his words, they might have been impressed by Artpe’s strong desire for obtaining a reward.

However, Artpe’s expression was excessively harsh. It wasn’t directed at the girl or the quest. His anger seemed to be directed at

someone else.

“A r...reward.... I don't have anything I can give you.....”

The girl looked like she was about to cry. Of course, Artpe knew this even before he heard her words. The girl wore very threadbare clothes, and when he checked with his Read All Creation ability, she didn't possess any items worth having on her body.

Despite this fact, Artpe continued to interrogate her.

“What? You don't even have a single bronze coin?”

“I do have a bronze coin, but that isn't enough.....”

Aena's eyes started to fill with tears. However, Artpe ruthlessly pushed his hand out towards her.

“Give it to me.”

“.....what?”

“I want you to take out the bronze coin.”

Aena's expression indicated that she had no idea what was going on, but she took out a bronze coin.

She possessed a very dirty bronze coin. It held very little value to Artpe that he wanted to snort, but it was a very precious and large sum of money for the girl. The money was very important to her.

“H....here.....”

Aena thought she had come looking for the wrong people. She thought she was getting ripped off in her time of need. Her eyes were shedding large amount of tears as she placed the bronze coin on top of Artpe's hand. Maetel was very angry as she watched what was going on. She had to scold Artpe! She had to scold him a lot! Artpe that makes a child cry was a bad Artpe!

“Artpe!”

“Be quiet, Maetel. I'm trying to assume the Quest Reward. Usually, not even dogs interrupt that process.

“Y...yes.”

However, Artpe replied as if he had predicted Maetel would become angry. She immediately shut her mouth. She was overwhelmed by Artpe’s attitude. She had no idea what made him so angry from the start, but Artpe was incredibly scary right now..... He also looked a little bit cool.

“Hoo-ooh.....”

After he quieted Maetel, he firmly gripped the coin he extorted from the girl. He put the coin away, and after he blinked once, he stood up.

Then he spoke clearly towards the girl.

“All right. I’ve accepted your Quest reward. Your payment in advance was 100%, and your balance is 0%. I will undertake the Quest starting now.”

This was the very first Quest he had accepted in his lifetime.

“What?”

“Our account is all settled now, so we are going to go find your dongsaeng”

“Yes.....?”

Aena blinked her eyes as if she couldn’t believe what she had just heard. However, Artpe didn’t hesitate. He put on his robe.

In truth, he was very sleepy, so he wanted to lie down. However, he could always sleep later. He felt restless right now. It felt as if he wouldn’t be able to take it if he didn’t move right now. This was why he prodded Aena into action in annoyance.

“Why are you standing there doing nothing? I’ve received the reward, so I’m going to do the Quest. Are you deaf?”

“Ah, no. But....!”

“I’m going to go find your dongsaeng starting now. I’ll somehow

find a way to track him down, and I'll return him to your side. Are you sure you want to set this as the condition that will complete the Quest?"

".....ah. Ah. Ah."

The girl finally understood what was going on. Until a moment ago, she had thought this young magician was trying to steal her money. However, he was saying he would really find her dongsaeng in return for that coin!

Even after thinking over it, the situation didn't make any sense to her, so she wondered if he was lying. However, Artpe was looking at her with sincere eyes, so she couldn't ask him if he was lying to her.

This was why she decided to trust Artpe.

"T...thank you very much! I...I don't know how I should express my thanks...."

"You can thank me after I find and return your dongsaeng safely to your side. I hope I'm not too late, but....."

Artpe grinded his teeth as he took in the sight of the girl again. He activated his Read All Creation ability, and her status was revealed to him.

[Aena]

[Level : 1]

[Curse : The process changing into low Class Magic Type Foreign Species 1%]

[Drank water containing Cursed Mana four days ago.]

'Which son of a bitch did this.....'

Could a person be turned into a monster? The correct answer was yes. It was easy for corpses in places with negative Mana to come back as zombies or ghouls. Then there were voluntary methods that would allow one to become a Death Knight or a Lich.

Amongst the Curses, there were a decent amount that turned a subject into a monster. Currently, a curse that turned a person into a monster was placed on her. This was the most representative example of someone violating a human's free will.

He had expressed this sentiment before, but this was the type of nonsense he hated the most.

The sound of his teeth grinding could be heard.

"As expected, Artpe is kind. You always told me 'A person should always be precise in one's calculations!'"

"Nope. My calculations were precise, right?"

"Pi. Liar. Artpe is just embarrassed."

Artpe smirked as he started spouting bullshit towards Maetel.

"Listen well, Maetel. The value of an item is relative. Basically, if I think my calculation is correct, then it is correct."

This was why the Quest Reward was important. If judged in an objective manner, even if something was worth a lot, it wouldn't be worth much to him if it wasn't something he needed. The balance in his calculation would be skewed. It was most definitely a tortuous way of thinking, but it was an absolute rule he followed.

"So what about you, Maetel?"

Artpe tapped his chest. It was the pocket where he put away the bronze coin.

"Is 1 Bronze enough for you as a Quest Reward?"

Maetel looked into Artpe's rage-filled eyes. She wondered why he was so angry. She thought maybe she'll be able to find out the underlying reason if she carried out Aena's request with him.

She always wanted a deeper understanding of Artpe. She was sure this request would move her a step closer to her goal.

If she was able to do so, that was a reward in itself.

“.....Yes. It is more than enough.”

“All right. We’ll carry out the Quest at the same time.”

The two held hands as they immediately rushed out of the room with Aena in the front. They arrived at a very small hut, and numerous townspeople were crowded inside the hut.

“M...magician-nim. In truth, my son was also.....”

“My d....daughter was captured. Those soldiers took all of the nearby children saying they need to check thoroughly.....!”

“I beg of you, mage-nim. Please! Our children!”

Everyone had similar stories to Aena. When Maetel saw the crowd of people, she wondered why they hadn’t come along with Aena. Why had they remained outside? Maetel had a puzzled expression on her face, but Artpe already had a good grasp of this situation.

Aena was probably sent to them as a representative of the townspeople, who had lost their children. They wanted to make the request, but they were too afraid to meet with Artpe. This was why they had pushed forward the youngest and weakest amongst them to speak to Artpe.

Even amongst the weak, there was always someone that was weaker than the others. This was why people like them always insisted on sacrificing the weakest amongst them. When it looked as if Artpe had accepted the quest, they finally scrambled to meet him.

Artpe spoke firmly towards the townspeople surrounding him.

“I want everything you guys own.”

“W...what? But you only wanted one bronze from Aena....”

“I received her entire net worth. I have to be fair in receiving the Quest Rewards. So are you going to request a Quest from me? Or maybe.... Shall I extract the price with my own hands?”

Everyone gathered at the location was struck dumb. They didn't need to look at Artpe's twisted smile to know that he was serious about his words.

For some reason, the young mage was very angry right now, and if they were rash in provoking him, their missing children wouldn't be the only problem they would face. The townspeople realized that they might be sent to a place where they would never be able to return from.

“U...understood!”

“We'll bring it!”

Everyone quickly ran into their homes. Artpe spat on the ground as he saw their backs, and he turned to look at Maetel. It looked as if she was still having a hard time completely understanding the situation.

“You would do well to watch this carefully. A crappy hero goes house to house to seize goods. A veteran hero like me makes the townspeople do my work instead.”

“.....Artpe looks like a really bad guy, but you look so cool that I like it anyways.”

Artpe wasn't a veteran hero. He had merely been one of the Four Heavenly Kings in his past life yet he was shit talking in a confident manner. Maetel let out an opinion that was bit strange for a hero to say. When Aena looked at both of them with a dumbfounded expression, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he asked her a question.

“Do you have any clues as to where your dongsaeng was taken.... Of course, you don't.”

“Yes. I just know that he was dragged away by the soldiers.....”

Aena once again had tears in her eyes as she lowered her head. As if Artpe had expected this, he nodded his head. He easily organized the situation in his head.

This incident began when the heroes were born. The palace tried to acquire them, yet they had failed. This brought instability to the throne. This allowed the Archduke to be successful in his rebellion, and the throne was stolen.

The Archduke probably unleashed all the soldiers in this region to search for the runaway crown prince and the heroes. He might have mobilized all the soldiers inside the country. If he wanted to build a firm foundation for his power, the archduke had to kill the crown prince. If he wanted to gain legitimacy for the throne, he had to procure the heroes.

Artpe could somewhat see the natural flow of events. However, there were two problems that he couldn't explain.

First, the soldiers were capturing all young children to check up on them. Secondly, Aena and maybe other children were being cursed through the drinking water. The curse placed on them would turn them into monsters.

Of course, these two problems might have nothing to do with each other.

The Archduke might be doing a thorough job by gathering all the children. The girl might have been unlucky in having a curse placed on her. The curse might not have anything to do with the other captured children.

‘Still, I used to insist everything will go well before I suffered crushing defeats. I had enough of that in my days as one of the Four Heavenly King inside the Demon King’s army.’

This was why Artpe decided to assume the worst. It might not just be Aenea or the children of this town. Maybe, all the children in this country was cursed.

He entertained the possibility of the people, who cursed the children, might have ties to the Archduke. They might be acting under his order.

‘If we are lucky, it might just be a simple black magician. If we are unlucky, it’ll be the Demon king’s army. If my past life is any indication, the Demon King didn’t use such a full-scale tactic at this point in time.....’

He shouldn’t just take it for granted that something won’t happen, because it hadn’t happened in his past life. No, he had to be more vigilant for that eventuality.

Moreover, the world that had restarted thanks to his high rank ability didn’t exactly match up with his previous life. If he domineered over others by clinging to old memories, he might die an ignominious death that was befitting the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings.

‘I’ll work under the assumption that there is a connection between the Archduke and the Demon King’s army. If so, I have a possible motive as to why the Archduke captured all the children of this town. The Demon King’s army may have used this opportunity to infect the children with the curse, and they are using the soldiers to collect them....’

What were they planning to do with the children, who were turned into monsters? He didn’t even need to ask that question. The general population would fall into chaos, so the Demon King’s army would have achieved its goal. Anything that happened afterwards was a bonus.

“That means....”

Artpe looked at Aena, and he thought how unlikely all of this was. If they hadn’t come to this town... No, if he hadn’t frightened away the soldiers, it would have been Aena’s turn to be taken away.

There weren’t any cursed children left in the town besides Aena. If she wasn’t here, he wouldn’t have been so aggressive in jumping into this matter. He wouldn’t have budged no matter what anyone would have said to him.

Basically, a small flame he had created at a whim had turned into this Quest.

“....so this is what it like to be a hero.”

Artpe shut his eyes as he mumbled to himself.

When he researched the progress of the hero in the past, he had wondered why trouble seemed to follow the hero. Now that he was the person directly involved in the matter, everything was falling into place.

He had no more excuses. Their actions forged the future. It sounded as if he was using circular reasoning.... Ah, it couldn't be. He probably wasn't.

At that moment, it became noisy outside. The townspeople had brought their 'entire fortune'

“M...magician-nim! We brought it all! This really is all our fortune!”

“It really is tough to make a living these days, so this is all we have. We are telling you the truth....!”

“Will you really find my child just from receiving this? I feel ashamed to say this is all we have....!”

When everyone gathered, Artpe opened his eyes.

He didn't plan on going through all the stuff brought to him by the people. He just wanted to punk them for their disgraceful behaviors. He planned on saving the blameless children from the start.

Of course, he couldn't outwardly express such an attitude.

“You should all give your thanks to Aena. You were too scared to meet me even though your children were captured. If it wasn't for Aena's bravery, I wouldn't have cared if your children died or not.”

The townspeople flinched at his venomous words. His words also

struck a nerve.

It should be enough to bring them to their senses. He hoped it was so.

“All right. After this, I’ll include all of you as clients. I’ll return your children... Huh?”

He was indifferently gathering all the ‘fortunes’ gathered by the townspeople when he saw a black pebble amongst the items. His eyes widened. A village woman flinched, and she spoke as if she was giving an excuse.

“M...my husband found it in the past! It was so pretty that I was hoping it was an expensive gem..... I’m sorry! I’m sorry!”

Artpe firmly shook his head.

“There is no way this is a gem, ajumma.”

“I’m sorry! I’m really sorry! Please my son....!”

Artpe had a twisted smile on his lips as he picked it up.

He didn’t know if it was fate or inevitability. It might be either, but..... Ah ah. This was quite fun.

“Its outer appearance looks like a gem, but this is something much more important. Rejoice, ajumma.”

“What?”

“You saved all the children.”

“What!?”

[Obsidian of Greed]

[Rank A]

[A magical stone that sucks in all curses. If it contains a curse, it doesn’t differentiate between Mana or a physical object. It absorbs and stores the curse. It can be used as activation ingredient for certain special curse magic. The amount of curse and the quality of curses will determine how much of a boos the magic spell will

receive. Currently, the stone is empty.]

Artpe's purple eyes confirmed the true nature of the black stone, and he once again let out a laugh.

He didn't care, who was pulling the strings to this plot. The idea of thoroughly crushing all of them made him so happy that he couldn't stop his laughter.

It was the first sortie for the rotten hero.

Chapter 35 – Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero

(3)

The Obsidian of Greed was originally an item used to gather power of curses. It was an ingredient used when making a more powerful curse.

This was an item for magicians who dealt in curses, and it was something they desperately wanted. It was representative of magic stones that couldn't be made artificially.

‘Moreover, this one is Rank A. It means it can store a lot of curses.’

On the other hand, there was an obvious limitation to this item. If an item or a Mana had the property of a curse, it would all be absorbed into the stone. However, it was hard to do anything significant when the curse was already active.

A curse wasn't like placing a load on a person's shoulder. A portion of a person's skin, bones, muscles, brain and heart went through subtle changes. These changes permeated into one's entire being, and the change would become inextricably linked to one's body.

This was why if one was rash in extracting the cursed Mana, the innate Mana within the subject would go on a rampage before killing the subject.

“If so.... Come, Aena. I'll deal with you first.”

“Y... yes!”

Of course, such limitations didn't apply to Artpe, because he possessed a rare cheat ability called the Read All Creation ability!

If he concentrated, he could get a detailed information on the composition of plants or creatures. So how could extracting cursed Mana from affected regions be difficult for him!

“This might hurt a little bit. Endure it.”

“W...what? What did I do.....”

“Endure it.”

“Ah, hoohk!?”

Artpe abruptly placed the Obsidian on Aena's forehead. Afterwards, Aena's body started to shake. The townspeople who had been watching this sight immediately stepped back in fright. Of course, Artpe didn't pay any attention to them.

“I caught it.”

He was able to pinpoint the part of her weak innate magical energy that was being dyed black with the energy of the curse. After a precise extraction, he spoke to her.

“Still, your erodibility was very low, so you didn't suffer as much.”

“E...erodibility.....?”

Aena was shaking from the pain as she asked him a question. She could immediately guess at what had happened, so her eyes opened wide.

Yes, she was sure her body hadn't felt normal.

If one felt fine when one was being changed into a monster through a curse, that person would be the incredible one.

“Monster...Modification Curse....? Then my dongsaeng and the other children of the town.....”

“The children were rounded up by them, because of that reason. Of course, they are also the ones who placed the curse on you.”

“Eeeeeeeek.”

The girl bit her lips in anger. A small smile appeared on Artpe's lips when he saw this. Pain usually transferred into emotion. The curse had progressed to a mere 1%, yet for a brief moment when

she raged.....

“All right. You did very well.”

“Ah.”

Artpe stepped back when he saw a slightly darker light within the Obsidian. He checked her with his Read All Creation ability, and not an ounce of curse energy was left behind. Aena blinked her eyes in wonder.

“My body feels light. I thought I had merely been tired and hungry.....”

“Did the unrest in your emotions lessen?”

“.....yes.”

Artpe impishly asked the question when it seemed he already knew the answer. Aena slightly nodded her head in confirmation. The townspeople who had been behind her started to crowd forward.

“W...will we change into monsters too, magician-nim?”

“I’m sorry, but could you perhaps heal us too.....”

When it came to their own well-being, they were quick to step forward. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he shook his head.

“You guys are fine. It seems the curse was placed on children, who hadn’t matured completely yet. So the problem is with your offsprings.”

“T...then my daughter....!?”

“Curse..... A curse!”

“It’ll be fine if I’m able to find them quickly. You shouldn’t worry about them this early in the process.”

They had thought this was a simple matter of the soldiers capturing their sons and daughters. However, a Modification Curse had been placed on them! The complexion of the

townspeople immediately darkened.

They were afraid of the sword carrying soldiers. However, they were more afraid of magic and curses. These were mysterious powers of unknown origin.

“What shall we do, magician-nim? We’ll do anything. If my child turns into a monster, I.....!”

“I beg of you! Please save my son!”

They were already very worried about their offsprings, but they found out there was a time limit to their rescue. The townspeople were agitated, and they went wild. If the soldiers were in front of them, they would have tried to rip them into pieces. Moreover, Maetel was also in a similar state of agitation.

“Let’s go right now, Artpe! I don’t know where the children of this tow is right now, but I’m sure the bad guys will do the same thing at different locations!”

“It is as you say. We don’t know where they are, so do you really want to search the entire region?”

“Still, we have to do something!”

In truth, old stories and legends about heroes were rife with such scenarios.

Some town would fall into crisis, and the hero would try to solve a problem with the help of the townspeople. However, a tragedy occurred when time ran out, and the hero would receive a big emotional burden. However, the pain of this event would allow the hero to mature mentally.

“However, we don’t need to mature mentally, so we can skip that step.”

Heroes who busily ran around deserts and jungles, while crying or laughing, were old news to him. Artpe couldn’t afford to waste his mental and physical energy like that.

What was so fun about searching everywhere, because one didn't know location where the Quest had to be carried out! He was a new breed of hero where he would finish the Quest as soon as he received it!

“Everyone get out of my way.”

“Yes. Yes, sir!”

Several dozen Mana Threads turned into several hundred as they extended out from Artpe. In a flash, they exited the town to spread into the region.

“Hoo-oooh…….”

Artpe looked as if he was standing still while he had his eyes closed. However, even those that didn't know anything about Mana could feel a pressure coming from this strange energy, and the townspeople were unable to move. Maetel, who had a decent idea on what was going on, let out a sigh of relief.

“If you had such a simple solution, you should have told me in the first place.”

“Who said this was simple?”

He took out a Mana potion bottle, and he drank it. He focused on his control as he grumbled to himself.. The several hundred Mana Threads were spreading in all directions, and the radius of the search increased steadily. It increase to 500 meters, 1 kilometers, 2 kilometers and so on.

In his past life, he was level 350, so this would have been easy. However, it wasn't easy at all right now! If it wasn't for the Mana String spell that strengthened the Mana Thread to the extreme, it would have been impossible to attempt this move. He briefly had this thought when he learned it, but it was a very cheat-like spell.

‘Wait a moment. I could probably overlay my spell similarly to what Maetel did last time with her techniques…….’

He wondered if his spell could be used in a more effective manner if he overlaid his perception skill on top of the Mana String.

Artpe immediately put his theory into action, and of course, it came back as a resounding success. He wondered if he was stealing and using Maetel's talent for such a trivial matter. He had been afraid.... However, if he was to be truthful about it, he was thankful for it.

“Five kilometer. Ten kilometer...”

“Shall I lend you my Mana, Artpe?”

“You only have a modicum of Mana, so how.....I found them.”

He was about to grumble towards Maetel when Artpe's eyes opened wide.

The townspeople looked at him with nervous eyes. Aena looked at him with trust, since he had freed her body from the curse. Maetel was ready to charge any opponents waiting for them.....

Artpe spoke to them in a solemn manner.

“Let's go create an epilogue.”

The place was located at a hill that was pretty far from the town. In other words, it was a great place to run into a Dungeon in the wild.

In this world, there were exactly two types of Dungeons. The first type was the sleeping Dungeons that waited for a hero to find it. The other type were Dungeons made by being that opposed the heroes. These Dungeons contained dangerous traps, super secret information or secret tests. These were Dungeons that had to be hidden away.

The common point of the two types of Dungeons was the fact that heroes eventually found it to loot their contents. The Dungeon in this hill would suffer the same fate.

“You guys don't have to follow me.”

“You are helping us despite the dangers, so how can we stay behind.....”

“You guys will get in the way, so just hide somewhere nearby. Of course, it isn’t my responsibility if you die in the process.”

He was an ex-Four Heavenly King turned hero, so he was remorseless. He firmly got rid of nuisances that would get in the way of the Quest beforehand!

The townspeople became afraid when they realized there might be other dangers nearby. However, they couldn’t run away while leaving their children behind. They firmly held to their edged tools they had brought from their homes. They stood their ground.

“W...we will wait for you here. At the very least, we will greet our children from here!”

“Really? Aren’t you guys just scared by the fact that soldiers might attack your town again?”

“I...it isn’t like that!”

It seemed he hit the mark. Artpe smirked as he tried to enter into the cave located at the middle of the hill.....

“I want to go with you.”

“Ah. You again?”

Aena blocked their way. She held a branch in one hand. It was a weapon that even a goblin would have an easy time breaking.

“The children will be afraid if only magician-nim’s party enters. The children need at least one familiar face.”

“It isn’t as if your words don’t have merit, but you.....”

She would be perfect for the part of a supporting cast who died midway in the story. Usually, the hero would rage at her death, and the boost provided by the emotion would lead the hero into victory.

In truth, the girl's words were raising so many death flags that the stench coming from the death energy was unbearable. It wouldn't be strange if she fell dead right now! At the same time, it was also likely that she would come back out unharmed, since the circumstances was a bit suspicious.

"I beg of you, magician-nim. I know these children the best. They are already afraid from being kidnapped by the soldiers. If the magician-nim's party encounter the children in such a state, a large mistake may occur.....!"

She had put a lot of thought into this. At this point, he couldn't turn turn her down. From that moment on, Artpe decided to give up on Aena's life. Yes, if she's meant to die, she would find a way to die eventually!

"All right. Your sacrifice will make it more likely that the children would be unharmed."

"Why is my sacrifice the premise of the children being safe!?"

"Let's go, Maetel. I'll leave the fighting to you. When I tell you to stop, you have to stop."

"I understand!"

The party consisting of the two heroes and the Village Girl A left behind the townspeople. They charged into the cave. There was a very dark and dreary energy circulating within the cave. A curse was mixed into the Dungeon's air. To be precise, it was curse meant to propagate a different spell.

"You must be enjoying it since there are a lot to eat, right?"

Artpe took out the Obsidian, and it sucked in all the curses. He never expected to find such a treasure within the normal town A at this point in time. This was a loss for the Demon King's army!

"Yes. As expected, I think Artpe would become a good father. Ooh-hue-hue."

Maetel watched Artpe fill the Obsidian with the curse. She looked on with satisfaction as she mumbled to herself. Aena wondered if she could trust these heroes that acted very strangely starting from the Dungeon's entrance. She had these thoughts, but she also didn't have much choice. She followed behind them.

When they entered a little bit deeper into the cave, the enemies soon appeared. The soldiers they had seen from the town was mixed in with a batch of soldiers they had never seen before.

The most important fact was that there was a magician wearing a hooded robe standing within their midst.

“Huht!? They are intruders. Intruders!”

“Be careful. He's the mage I saw in town.....!”

“Magician? That brat is one?”

It seemed the soldiers didn't feel any shame at being found out. They immediately got ready to attack. It meant they were fully aware of what they were doing, and they were prepared to kill to fulfill their goals.

At this point, he was sure that there was a connection between the archduke, the black magician and the Demon King's army. Artpe was about to step forward as he grinded his teeth, but Maetel took one step forward before he was able to.

“You are making children into monsters..... It's bad.”

Maetel's emerald colored eyes flashed from anger. Artpe realized she had already finished judging who was good and evil.

“Anyways, we.....”

This was the part where the hero and the villains confronted each other. The villains would lay out their twisted logic behind their actions as they mocked the hero.

The hero would become enraged, and they would fight. The bad guys liked to talk while fighting, so they would prattle on about the

righteousness of their actions. They would try to justify their cause. The hero would get angry once again at their words. The Death Knight within the Dungeon meant to foster the heroes was a great example of this.

“Be quiet! Shut the hell up!”

However, the current situation was different. Maetel swung her bastard sword once before her enemies could pull their swords out or activate a spell. They all fell to the floor.

She hadn't activated her Berserk. She wasn't even using her Strike skill. It was a light attack that possessed not a single ounce of Mana.

“Hoo-oooooh.”

They were completely wiped out. They didn't even have the time to give their lines. The mage wasn't able to call out the Black Flame Dragon sealed within its right arm!

“Heeek…….”

Aena had depended on them, because she had seen the power of Artpe as a magician. However, when she saw the terrible sight created by Maetel, her face turned pale.

On the other hand, Maetel was the one who had created this terrible sight, yet it didn't feel real to her. She tilted her head in confusion as she turned to speak to Artpe.

“They are too weak, Artpe.”

Artpe did a double take when he heard her words, but a smile soon broke out on his face. He nodded his head at her.

“It's all right.”

Usually, a normal hero's first quest was accompanied by failure and hardships. However, they had unintentionally leveled up as much as they could in the kingdom of Diaz. In other words....

“Since we are progressing towards part 2, this is normal.”

“Part 2?”

Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement, but Artpe just smiled at her. While Aena was still in an utter state of confusion, the heroes went through the entire Dungeon.

No one could get in their way.

Chapter 36 – Come to Think of It, I’m a Hero

(4)

Artpe ran through the Dungeon with his Read All Creation ability active. He was able to find the trap. He was able to assess the number of the nearby enemies and their abilities. He was also able to monitor the amount of Mana possessed by the Dungeon.

His existence made any traps and ambushes irrelevant. Moreover, no one could endure more than a single attack from Artpe and Maetel. Aena was running without rest, yet she was barely able to keep up with them.

“They are strong……!”

“That is the third line in the ‘50 lines that no one survived after saying it’. You must have studied it a little bit.”

Artpe had been running while he kept a hold on Aena’s hand. He lightly infused Mana into his dagger. The dagger pierced through the throat of a retreating soldier. When the soldier fell, the black magician hiding in the back was revealed.

“B...blessing of the clandestine darkness…….”

“Hoohng.”

His opponent revealed his identity as a black magician by chanting a spell. However, the dagger planted inside the throat slid out as it rose into the air again. It embedded itself into the black magician’s heart.

The black magician had no idea what had happened to him. He fell helplessly to the floor as Maetel also took care of the remaining soldiers in a flash. She mumbled to herself as if she was dumbfounded by what had occurred.

“They are too weak.”

“Do you remember me telling you about the Demon world’s

greatest chef?”

“Yes! I want to eat food that was cooked by that demon!”

Artpe looked at her with peculiar eyes when she said those words.

“It seems the Demons are making a once in a lifetime food here.”

“How do you know that? There are only bad people here.”

“There is a reason.”

If there was a powerful Demon present here, there was a good chance that Artpe and Maetel would suffer a defeat. However, this was probably a minor plan, so why would they dispatch a Demon over level 200 here? It wasn't something that was done lightly. All the black magicians up until now were humans, and none of them were over level 50.

In truth, the Demon King didn't just send the weakest first against the hero. He sent the weakest amongst his subordinates to do all his tasks. This was also true when he dealt with the joint forces.

It somewhat made sense if he planned on only letting the strongest survive regardless if they were allies or not. Anyways, no matter how he thought about it, the Demon King was an idiot.

“R...run away.....!”

“No, we can't run away.”

“We....we have to call him.....”

“No, we can't call him.”

The weak typically ran away when a strong opponent made an appearance. If running away wasn't an option, they called for reinforcement. Of course, it was useless in front of the all-around hero Maetel and the rotten hero Artpe.

“Koohk!”

“Kah-hahk!”

They were all killed as soon as they were found, so news didn't flow towards the inner Dungeon where others were on standby. This was why they died saying similar lines or they died before they could even speak.

Artpe planned on making a manuscript that wrote down the most common phrases spoken before death by minor characters. His enemies here were faithful in using those repertoire of phrases.

“Use the transmission magic!”

“That isn't working either.”

“Kahk!”

At the very least, Artpe was vigilant about their use of transmission magic. They didn't have to be afraid of anyone within the Dungeon, but if an officer of the Demon King's army could be mobilized, there would be no countermeasure.

Of course, transmission magic was useless in front of his Read All Creation ability and Mana String. His opponents couldn't even use a simple magic or a curse.

“D...do you guys realize what you've just done!”

“Yes, we already know, so you don't have to explain it to us.”

“Kuh-huhk!”

It was as if the soldiers deluded themselves into thinking they were the archduke, and the black magicians put on air as if they had risen to the seat of the Demon King. However, they were all killed by Maetel's sword and Artpe's dagger before they could utter their threats.

The 1st floor ended in short order, and the 2nd floor also didn't take too long.

Aena was getting tired as she tried to keep up with them.

“How... Hehk. This is.....”

“Shhh.”

When they descended to the 3rd floor, Artpe spread his Mana Threads in all directions. He immediately asked for silence from his party members. Then his expression crumpled in a rueful manner.

“As expected of a first Quest.... The Dungeon ends at the third floor. However.... The Quest started a bit too late. Tsk.”

“Sometimes Artpe says some very profound words.”

“The children are here.....?”

The curse present in the atmosphere of the 1st and 2nd floor was bearable for normal people. However, it was possible to see the curse with one's eye on the 3rd floor. It looked like a very thick fog.

“Koohk, magician-nim. It feels as if the air is burning.....!”

When he saw that Aena's complexion had immediately turn pale, he took out the obsidian as he clicked his tongue. It sucked in all the curse residing within the atmospheric Mana.

Aena's complexion improved a little bit, but the pain she was feeling wouldn't subside until he could get rid of all the curse in the atmosphere. Nevertheless, it was fortunate that he had gotten rid of her curse earlier.

“We'll be running at full speed from now on. Aena, you have to run as if your life's on the line. Understood?”

“I...I understand.”

The 3rd floor was unusually quiet. There were only three people running across the floor, so small sounds echoed throughout the hallway. All the traps were disabled and destroyed . The soldiers and black magicians that had shown up on the 1st and 2nd floor every time they had gotten bored weren't present here. The curse on the 3rd floor had been strong enough to be dangerous to them

too.

“It is so quiet that it is making me feel very uneasy. Artpe.....”

“Don’t worry. The children aren’t dead yet. At the very least, not all of them.”

Artpe’s words hinted at something. It was easy to discern what he was talking about. The expression on the faces of Maetel and Aena hardened. However, their steps quickened as if they were responding to their emotions.

Maetel bravely ran through the Dungeon filled with the curse. Artpe tied the Obsidian of Greed to a Mana String, and he rotated it to suck in all the curse. He kept storing the curse as he followed her.

Aena followed behind them, and tears were already filling her eyes. She held a branch in her slender hands. She had brought it with her as her weapon, and her heart shook like the branch.

They passed one room than another.

Maetel suddenly came to a stop when they went past the 3rd room.

“.....ooh.”

“Warrior-nim?”

“Ooooooh.”

A groan leaked out of Maetel’s mouth. Artpe had seen the information regarding his surrounding with his Read All Creation ability, so he knew why she was reacting that way.

If possible, he hadn’t wanted her to see this sight. However, the Obsidian of Greed sucked in all of the fog created by the curse. It made the surrounding brighter, so it was impossible to miss it.

“.....they are dead.”

Maetel spoke with a trembling voice. One could see a dead

monster at the corner of the room. It had lying in a pool of its blood. Artpe kept silent as Aena also caught sight of the monster.

The monster had a small body as if it hadn't fully matured, yet its arms and legs were abnormally long. It was wearing tattered human clothes, and it was crusted with dried brown blood.

“Ah. Ah-ooooh.”

When she confirmed the other monster corpses, Aena let out an inarticulate moan. The monsters weren't wearing clothes or accessories that would allow her to identify them. However, they all looked like her dongsaeng to her.

Artpe was able to find out that the children had turned into monsters around 10 days ago using his Read All Creation ability. However, he kept that fact to himself. All the dead monsters here had been in the same situation as Aena's dongsaeng.

“Why did they kill them……?”

“That I do not know. If their goal was to make children into monsters, they probably wanted them for something. They must have had a plan. The fact that they killed the children instead of sending them out into the world……”

It was hard to come up with an explanation. If the Demon King's army wanted to sow confusion in the outside world, they would have sent the monsters out into the world. They had succeeded in applying the curse, yet the monsters were killed? It was an idiotic move.

If not, maybe there was a plan that Artpe was unable to discern?

“It must have hurt a lot.”

While Artpe was going through his thoughts, Matel mumbled to herself in an absent minded manner. The monsters had died as they spit out blood, and Maetel couldn't turn her gaze away from them. She kept repeating the same words as if something had broken within her.

“It must have hurt a lot.... It must have hurt a lot....”

“Maetel.”

A red energy started emanating from her body. It was a sign that her Berserker skill was about to be activated. Artpe quickly grabbed her, and the energy was instantly gathered within her. The fact that she was able to retract it so easily was scarier than the skill itself.

Maetel turned towards Artpe as she made a request.

“Artpe? The children.... Please don’t leave any behind....”

“I understand.”

When Artpe extended his hand, the corpses of the dead monsters were incinerated in a flash. He had spent a great deal of money learning this magic, yet he had never expected this would be the first place he would use it. He was dumbfounded at the turn of events.

“I’m sorry, kids.... I’m sorry I didn’t get here sooner.”

“Ah, ah-oooooh.....hoohk.”

Maetel mumbled to herself as she stood still. She watched the corpses of the children turn to ash inside the fire. Aena couldn’t shake the thought that her dongsaeng might be amongst the dead monsters. She wasn’t in her right mind. Artpe watched them as he firmly bit his lips.

‘Maetel’s abilities are amazing, but her mind is too immature. If possible, I wanted her to experience such dirty business later on..... Shit.’

Since the incident had already occurred, nothing could be done about it. Artpe wanted to change the mood surrounding Maetel and Aena, so he lightly clapped his hands. He drew their attention to him.

“We can mourn for them at a later time. We have to move before

it is too late.”

“.....I understand.”

Maetel firmly nodded her head. She glared at the fog created by the curse, and she launched herself forward.

“Let’s hurry.”

The 3rd floor of the Dungeon was ridiculously long compared to the other floors. Every time the curse was absorbed the sight of one or two corpses of monsters revealed themselves.

Aena’s body shook every time more corpses were found, but the two heroes didn’t stop. The only thing they did was to burn the bodies with flame when they were found.

The only thing that deserved a special mention was Maetel’s status.

[Maetel]

[Level : 174]

[Berserk Lv13]

He knew Maetel hadn’t activated her Berserk skill, but when he checked with his Read All Creation ability, her Berserk skill was progressing in real-time.

When she saw the corpses of the monster-turned children being burned to ash, she threw herself further into the fog created by the curse, and a red energy emanated from her. It looked as if it would manifest, but Maetel collected it back into herself every time. It was as if she was building up her rage as she waited for the moment to release it all at once.

It was something that could be seen in Berserkers that had learned to control their emotions over numerous years. It was a stage that could be attained after being in countless battles, yet Maetel was showing similar signs to those Berserkers. Even Artpe didn’t dare to guess what she was feeling right now.

“I...I’ve already counted over h....hundred of them, magician-nim. What shall we do? What can we do?”

“The scale of this operation is much larger than I expected. In a worst case scenario, there’s a possibility of there being more of these Dungeons.Maetel, stop.”

When she heard Artpe’s words, Maetel immediately stopped in place. She also could feel it. The person responsible for these atrocities were nearby.

The Obsidian had already sucked in as much curse as it could in the atmosphere, so the black magician on the 3rd floor had immediately known something was wrong. This was why he had placed a trap as he waited for the party to come to him.

Of course, a Dungeon and a magician that could cast a curse of this caliber couldn’t defeat Maetel at her level, but.....

“I know you are angry. However, if you aren’t able to shape your rage to your will, it will someday trip you up. Most Berserkers eventually meet their death through this mistake.”

“Artpe..... Thank you for the warning.”

Maetel had a faint smile on her face. When he was faced with the smile, he realized his warning had been unnecessary.

“However, I’ll never make such a mistake. I can’t afford to make that kind of mistake at this moment.”

“.....yes. Let’s do this.”

“All right.”

When Maetel took one step, Artpe extended his Mana String to completely disable the trap waiting for them. Of course, when he did so, their enemy became aware of it.

“You guys saw through the trap, you damn bastards!”

There was only one enemy here. To be precise, there was only one black magician capable of enduring the atmospheric curse.

“You guys made such a ruckus.... That is why I’m going to deal with you myself...huh?”

The obsidian had sucked in all the atmospheric curse. One could see children carelessly discarded all over the large room as if they were a collection of junk materials. Then there was the middle aged man wearing a overly elaborate robe pointing his staff at them.

“You guys are kids.....!?”

The magician was also able to see the party now. When he realized the intruders were merely three children, his eyes widened in surprise.

“I never expected children to be able to endure the curse to reach this place!”

Artpe calmly asked the question.

“Are you the one who spread this damned curse?”

“Of course, I spread it! However, the result has been sub-optimal. Now that I see you guys....”

An ugly smile appeared on his face..

“If this goes well, I might be able to succeed in my test!”

“A test.....”

Maetel gripped her long sword hard.

While they confronted the black magician, she continued to look over the fallen children inside this communal space.

She saw the starving children who were sullied by the curse. They were in pain.

“A test....”

The red energy soared before it was absorbed. This process kept repeating itself. If rage could be personified, Artpe thought the person would look like Maetel right now.

“You are bad. You are really bad!”

Maetel couldn't hold herself back, so she denounced her opponent. The amount of red vapor emanating from her body kept increasing.

It seemed the black magician was unable to see this vapor. If he could feel her heavy anger, he wouldn't be able to smile like right now.

“Haha. You are very funny, child! Who do you think you are? What allows you to be able to determine what is right and wrong? You have a lot to learn! A lot!”

Maetel ignored his words as she slightly bent her knees. She pushed her sword forward to get into her stance.

There was a distance of 50 meters between Maetel and the black magician. From the black magician's perspective, it looked as if she had lost her cool. He thought that was why she didn't register the distance between them. The magician grinned when he assessed her state of emotion. He laughed as he raised his staff.

“It seems I'll have to give you an explanation. I'll tell you what my test is for. It is for our great.....”

The bastard tried to do something evil characters had a patent on. He tried to explain why they were doing such bad things, their final goal and the method in which they would terrorize the world. However, he wasn't able to enlighten them.

“Hoo-ooh.”

Maetel's long sword cut his head off in one stroke. Normal humans die when their head was severed. The dead do not speak. Unfortunately, the bastard hadn't put a curse on himself that would have turned him into a lich.

“W...warrior-nim.”

“Maetel, you.....”

Until a moment ago, Maetel had been pretty far away from her target. However, she was putting away her sword as she stood where the black magician had been standing previously. Aena and Artpe's eyes turned round when they saw something akin to magic. Maetel turned to look at Artpe, and she was in a similar state of shock.

"It feels weird, Artpe."

She couldn't use magic. If so, did she borrow Artpe's boots to use the Blink spell? Of course not.

"It feels as if this power has always been within me."

"That's..... So that's how it is."

Artpe replied with a dumbfounded yet hollow voice.

He was having a hard time believing the information reflected in his eyes. He already knew she was a genius, but he never imagined the possibility of her talent exceeding the hero from his previous life.

[Maetel]

[Hero]

[Level : 174]

[Innate Ability : Acceleration]

The hero from his previous life had barely been able to awaken to her innate ability called Acceleration at age 19.

Maetel had just awakened to it at age 13.

Chapter 37 – Come to Think of It, I'm a Hero

(5)

In his past life, the hero had grown rapidly despite being severely handicapped by her environment. She had grown from level 200 to level 374 in just a year. Even if a great chef assisted in her development, it would have been impossible to do without her Innate Abilities.

That's right. The hero had awakened to an Innate Ability called Acceleration at the age of 19. The Acceleration skill could function as either a passive skill or an active skill. It sped up all her abilities. The smallest benefit from her movement speeding up, and the largest benefit came from it influencing her growth.

Her level up had been unusually fast until now thanks to a small fragment of her latent innate influencing her. Moreover, the power of Acceleration allowed her to move at unbelievable speed to cut down the black magician.

Of course, if she used it as an active skill, it would consume significant amount of Mana. However, it was the maximization of her basic movements, so it wouldn't exhaust her.

'I knew she would awaken to it faster, since she was injected into live battles at an earlier age compared to her previous incarnation. However, I never expected her to learn that particular ability at age 13.....'

Artpe looked at Maetel who looked confused. He mumbled to himself as he felt dumbfounded.

Most in the human race didn't possess an Innate ability. It was the same for the Demon race. Even if one had the requirements needed to possess an Innate Ability, it was unknown as to when a person might develop that Innate Ability. It wouldn't surprise anyone if it took several dozens of years for it to develop. It wasn't

impossible for one to fail to develop one's Innate Ability in one's life time.

However, once one's Innate Ability was awakened, one would gain a power that was on a whole different level. One would also grow at a pace that couldn't be compared to the previous rate. Most of the beings that left an indelible mark in history all had Innate Abilities. Even when an Innate Ability looks useless, it had a special quality of overpowering other skills and Classes.

“Innate ability.....”

Maetel had heard Artpe's explanation, but it seemed she was having a hard time wrapping her head around it. It was to be expected. Her actions wasn't something she had done consciously. It had resulted, because she had let her instincts take over her body.

If she was asked to use the Acceleration ability again right now, she would be unable to use it. Of course, the Innate Ability would continue to influence her since it had been awakened. Her level up pace would be faster than before..... Artpe had a thought. Maybe it would really take them less than 2 years to kill the Demon King. He let out a feigned laughter at the thought.

“Maetel, you don't have to worry too much about it. I'll slowly walk you through it.”

“I understand, Artpe. As expected, Artpe already has an Innate Ability?hue hue. You really are amazing.”

It seemed she felt a little bit better after deposing the black magician. Maetel was finally able to bring herself to smile a little bit. Aena, who had been watching all of this, impatiently tugged at Artpe's sleeve.

“M...magician-nim. Can we now...what I'm trying to say is.....”

“Yes, I'm sorry. This was such an unexpected development that both of us became absent minded. We'll finish the Quest now.”

Artpe shook off Aena's hand, and he turned around. Beyond the dead corpse of the black magician, he could see children writhing in pain.

"It hurts."

"Mommy....."

The black magician imprisoning them was dead, yet the children was unable to realize this fact. The children were a hollow shell of themselves. They had lost their normal thoughts and senses. They were being tormented by the pain.

"You will be ok now, kids. We'll help you guys!"

"Sienna, Sienna!"

"It hurts. It hurts!"

"I want to see my mom. Mommy."

The communal space was a mess. How many children were in this place?

The number of monster corpses they discovered coming to the 3rd floor was insignificant compared to the number of children here. If every child here became monsters,.... If the Demon King's army took control of the monsters here to attack the other towns within this kingdom.....

"The war with the Demon King's army will be hastened a little bit....."

They had put a lot of effort in turning the children into monsters, yet they were killed and thrown away inside the Dungeon. The black magician beheaded by Maetel had spouted some nonsense about an experiment. It seemed they weren't simply trying to turn children into monsters.

'No, this isn't the time to have such thoughts..'

Artpe took out the Obsidian of Greed. At that moment, the flow of energy within the communal space changed.

There was the faint energy of curse in the air, and the wicked energy leaking out from the corpse. Then there was the curse energy roiling within the innocent children.

All of it were changed into black smoke. This black smoke flooded towards Artpe and the obsidian he was holding.

“Koohk.”

“Artpe!?”

Maetel had been overwhelmed by the sight created by Artpe. However, she let out a scream when she saw him grip his head. Artpe shook his head as if to tell her that she didn’t need to worry about him.

He was using the obsidian against numerous children at once. Even if he was the possessor of the Read All Creation ability, he couldn’t escape the headache created by this act..... Still, he’d rather endure the headache rather than see the hero’s heart crumble in this place.

“You should comfort the children. There is a close connection between the curse and their emotions..... If you speak to them in a calm voice, it should be enough. Please do this for me.”

“.....I understand.”

It was hard to tell if they were human or trash if seen from afar. The children were carelessly thrown together in a neglected pile. One could tell that they weren’t given much food or water. It was the perfect environment that would fuel the advance of the curse.

“Sienna! Sienna, where are you!”

Aena kept calling out her dongsaeng’s name as she walked amongst the children. It seems she wasn’t having any luck finding her. Artpe didn’t have any reason to stop her. He fully understood what she was feeling right now.

“You’ll be fine, children. You’ll all be fine now.... You’ll be fine.”

“Sienna…… Please!”

“Ah. Ooh-ahhhhh…….”

It was almost like a miracle to them. At that moment, they heard a voice that made the hearts of Maetel, Aena and Artpe brighten. In the midst of the children groaning in pain, they definitely heard a voice that held consciousness!

“Artpe!”

There was a quick catch in her voice as Maetel let out a shout of joy. As if he had been waiting for this moment, he started giving her directions.

“Let’s move him out towards the perimeter! More and more children will be freed from the hold of the curse!”

“Yes!”

Maetel let out tears of joy as she took the child to the perimeter. It wasn’t just that child. She separated the children in the throes of pain, so each child had some room of their own. She hugged and stroked the children.

Her heart had been in a heightened state from the rage she felt. However, her heart had now calmed down. She directed an endless amount of worry and sympathy towards the children. When he saw this, Artpe let out a sigh of relief even though he was suffering from a headache.

“Ah, ah-ooh-ooh?”

“I…I can see again. Who are you, noona?”

“I want you to bear with me a little bit further. You’ll make a complete recovery soon!”

As more Mana rushed towards the obsidian, more children gained consciousness as they were freed from the curse. It started with one child. The number increased to 10, 50…… The expressions of the other children started to calm down.

“Amazing, Artpe.... You are amazing.”

“Sienna!”

The number of children gaining consciousness went past 100, yet Aena hadn't caught sight of her dongsaeng. Aena calculated the date when she was captured. Her dongsaeng shouldn't have been amongst the slain monsters....

Artpe firmly bit his lips as he checked the status of the black obsidian. The obsidian had darkened to a point where it indicated that it had almost reached its limit.

He knew there was a limit to how much it can store, but it had filled up too fast. This quest had been much larger in scale than he had expected it to be.

Fortunately, Artpe had prepared for the worst, so he had a contingency plan in his back pocket.

“Reinforcement.”

In the process of smashing through the beginner's Dungeon with Maetel, he had acquired the Reinforcement skill. This wasn't just a normal reinforcement skill. The skill allowed him to improve an Artifact at its foundation. In his previous life, Artpe wouldn't have dare to dream about obtaining such a skill. It was a Rank SSS skill!

This skill was in Artpe's hands right now.

He could see the structure of all items through his Read All Creation ability, and now he had the Reinforcement skill. He could use Reinforcement on specific parts of an item, and it was possible for him to reinforce an item that was supposed to be impossible to reinforce. Basically, it was a cheat.

It was as he surmised. It was possible to strengthen the Obsidian of Greed with his Reinforcement skill. In a flash, half of Artpe's enormous reservoir of Mana was consumed by the obsidian. The obsidian shone brighter than before, and it had increased in size.

Once again the flow of energy within the space changed. When the obsidian's absorption rate was reinforced, the cursed Mana hidden within the body of the children couldn't resist against the pull of the obsidian.

"Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!"

"It hurts. It hurts too much!"

Screams of pain erupted from various locations. However, the pain was proof that they were alive.

The scream became shouts, and despair turned into joy.

Artpe was controlling too much Mana flow, so it felt as if his head was about to burst. He ignored the pain as he kept increasing the absorption rate. It would be a tragic comedy if monsters were born, because he dawdled.

"Sienna..... Sienna!"

"U...unni."

It was at that moment when Aena found her dongsaeng. Her dongsaeng was sprawled amongst the children. She had been barely able to regain consciousness thanks to Artpe's power, and she was able to face her unni.

Artpe glanced towards them when he became loss for words.

"U...unni."

"Sienna? Sienna, what's wrong! Sienna!"

A tragic comedy of a situation was about to really occur right now.

"Unni, it hurts. My head and chest hurts so much. Unni, unni."

"S...Sienna! Magician-nim! My Sienna is....!"

Artpe didn't reply to Aena's heartfelt plea. He firmly shut his mouth, but he was able to see the most accurate information regarding the girl named Sienna through his eyes.

[Sienna]

[Level : 1]

[Strength : 6 Agility : 7 Stamina : 14 Magical Energy : 23]

[Transformation Progress to Intermediate Magic-type Species
33%]

[Experiment Success]

The curse applied to Sienna had been a success, and she was being turned into a monster. He could try to pull out the curse energy, but the change had already started. The curse and her Mana were tangled, so his actions might make her suffer more pain before she died.

It was an absurd situation. How could the timing be like this? Why did it have to be Aena's dongsaeng? It was a most laughable situation he found himself in. This story seemed to be tailor-made for a hero's story. It almost made him question if this scenario was constructed from the beginning.

“Magician-nim! My dongsaeng's face is darkening.... Magician-nim!”

“.....”

Maetel was taking care of the other children. Her face stiffened when she realized what Sienna was talking about. However, she wasn't like Aena who kept calling Artpe's name. She asked Artpe a question with a calm voice.

“Artpe..... Were we too late for this child?”

“You.....”

What did she plan on doing if they were too late to do anything? Artpe was afraid of her answer, so he didn't ask the question. She was extremely pure, and she wanted to save the children. In the future, he knew she would regret her decision if things proceeded along this path.

“W...warrior-nim. She can recover. It isn't too late for Sienna! Warrior-nim! Please speak some sense into her, magician-nim!”

It seemed Aena could sense what Maetel was planning on doing. Her eyes turned round as she desperately clung to Maetel.

She was only level 1, so she didn't have the power to stop Maetel. However, Maetel couldn't advance as she turned her gaze towards Aena. Maetel's face was also distorted.

“Aena.... What if Sienna harms the other children.... What would you do? How would you handle this when the other children will become involved..... I don't know the answer. I'm sorry, Aena. I don't know....”

“You can't, warrior-nim! Please save Sienna! Magician-nim, magician-nim!”

It seemed the conversation with Aena had the effect of pushing Maetel towards an unfavorable outcome for Aena. Maetel firmly shut her eyes before she opened them. Sienna was starting to change, so Maetel slowly walked towards her.

“Wait a moment, Maetel.”

Artpe stopped Maetel at that moment.. The obsidian had reached Rank S thanks to the power of the Reinforcement skill. He had absorbed all the curse from the children except for the one within Sienna.

There wasn't a single ounce of curse energy within the communal space. It didn't matter what the Demon King's army had planned here. A part of their plan ended in failure at that moment. At this point, the Quest could be seen as a success.

Of course, this would be true if they excluded one person, Aena's dongsaeng.

“I said stop, Maetel. The Quest hasn't ended yet.”

Maetel continued to walk towards the child, but she obediently

stopped when she heard him call her.

“Artpe, perhaps.....”

Her mouth opened. Her voice shook.

“Is it possible.....?”

“You should keep your sword unsheathed. We don’t know when she’ll run rampant.”

“.....yes.”

Maetel unsheathed her sword with trembling hands. Aena no longer held onto Maetel. She just looked at Artpe with pleading eyes.

As he received pleading gazes from the two girls, he let out a long sigh as he walked forward.

At his core, Artpe didn’t like adventures. He was of the opinion that adventurers shouldn’t do adventures.

There was no reason to take unnecessary risks for him. There was no reason why he should expect failure.

He could check all answers with his Read All Creation ability. He just had to act when he had the right answers. It was that simple.

However, he was looking at Sienna’s information window. She seemed to be in a hopeless situation, but two things bothered Artpe.

First, there was the ambiguous term of ‘Intermediate Magic-type Species’ written in her info. Secondly, he saw the word ‘Experiment Success’. He hadn’t been able to see those words in children that had been successfully turned into monsters.

What if the goal of the tests weren’t to make children into monsters? If that was their goal then they would have branded the monster-turned children as successful test subjects. Why would they kill them once they were turned into monsters?

As he kept thinking about it, he kept having questions about the word 'Intermediate Magic-type Species'. Of course, monsters were a magic type. So why did they use the particular expression of magic type species?

When he discovered the curse for the first time in Aena, he had seen the same phrase. At the time, it hadn't caught his attention. However, maybe Artpe was operating under a misapprehension?

What if the black magicians and the Demon King's army weren't aiming for a simple monster transformation?

What if the fact that the children were completely turned into monsters were considered to be failures? What if they were killed for that reason?

What if there was something special about Aena and Sienna?

What if Sienna was the 'only' success in their experiments?

"Koo-koo-ahhhhhh. It hurts so much, unni. Unni, unniiiiii!"

"Sienna, no! Sienna!"

"Artpe.....! Hurry!"

When it specified magic type species.... It might be referring to the 'Demon race'.

This test was aimed at making humans into demons.

"Shit. That damn Demon King....."

If this was truly the Demon King's plan, maybe the Demon King came up with a 'control' plan that differed from the one in his previous life!

"Maybe he is thinking about using 'Absolute Control' on all the beings on this world!"

Artpe gritted his teeth as he shouted those words. He couldn't remain calm any longer.

The massive amount of Mana stored within his body was

resolved into a Mana Strings. It looked as if wings had sprouted from Artpe.

The dark Mana threads clung to the entire body of the human girl who was turning into a demon. He started desperately tuning her Mana.

“I won’t let you do this……!”

Artpe’s eyes shone with a purple light.

“I won’t let you have her, you son of a bitch!”

He was able to see past everything to reach the truth. His Innate Ability always led him towards the right path. He combined the ability with a Unique spell called Mana String.

It was supposed to be impossible to combine the two abilities, yet they were combined. The girl’s body was being demonified at an uncontrollable speed. Her body twitched.

The Mana within her body started flowing backwards at the guidance of the Mana Strings.

The hero forged a miracle at that moment.

Chapter 38 – Come to Think of It, I’m a Hero (6)

He had become a hero, so he finally stiffened his resolve to fight the Demon King. So what the hell was this? The Demon King was trying to change humans into demons? Artpe wanted to farm in the human world at a later date. It would be a problem if the human world was turned into the demon world! He wouldn’t forgive anyone who attempted to pour cold water on Artpe’s retirement plan.

Artpe’s burning will was infused into the Mana Strings, and they burrowed into her body. From the beginning, Artpe hadn’t planned on stopping the change entirely. A complete reversal of the change was impossible. Such tasks were in the territory of the gods.

The only thing he could do was influence the direction of the change. Yes, it was the same as when he made the changes to the Record Link inside the Dungeon.

‘I just have to prevent her from becoming a demon. She also has to have control over herself. I have to protect these two things. It is a must.’

Artpe used all the experience he gained from his past life as he tuned her with his Mana Strings. The Mana Strings infused with the power of the Read All Creation ability continuously moved in a subtle manner to suppress the changes caused by the Mana, and the Mana was directed towards a different direction.

Whether it was his life as a demon or a human hero, his Innate Ability had always been with him. It was really ironic that these two vastly different experiences was of help when dealing with this problem.

He now had extensive knowledge about demons and humans. His

knowledge allowed him to combine the Mana String and the Read All Creation ability. It gave him the ability to open a new path for the Mana within Sienna's body.

“Ah. Ah-ooh-ooh-ahhhhhh.”

“Can you hear me, Sienna? You have to resist against the impulse to fight the flow of Mana. You have to concentrate, and you have to be clear in your thoughts. You can't be swayed by your impulse.”

Artpe kept talking to Sienna, who was groaning from the pain she was feeling. He continued to manipulate his Mana Strings.

In some aspects, he had to concentrate harder than the time when he had absorbed all the curse in this communal space at once. However, he was fueled by his anger towards the Demon King, and an urgent need to prevent Maetel from becoming wounded by this incident. There were multiple factors driving him forward, so this task was really nothing to him.

“Sienna, Sienna!”

“Stay still, Aena. I also feel restless, but.... If we interfere with Artpe right now, Sienna will be in big trouble.”

“Ooh ooh ooh……!”

Maetel had calmed down thanks to Artpe, so she was able to hold back the agitated Aena. She gathered the children to one side.

Even if they had been freed from the curse, they hadn't bathed since arriving here. Moreover, they hadn't been fed. The state of their health was a mess. If she wanted their bodies to feel the least amount of stress, she would have to send them outside the Dungeon.

“Noonah, I'm hungry.”

“I'm cold. I'm scared. Who is that hyung? Is he on the same side as the ajusshi? Will we turn out weird like her?”

“No, everything is fine. You will all be better soon.”

Maetel was still a child. She was at an age where she should be under the protection of adults. However, she didn't hesitate to take care of children who were of similar age as her. In fact, she took care of kids that were older than her.

‘I'm tired. I'm tired and exhausted. I want to rest.’

She glanced at the cowering children, then she turned to look at Artpe. He was using an incomprehensibly complex magic to save the last child.

His eyes didn't falter as brilliant Mana rose out of him. She was sure he was more tired than her, yet Artpe only thought about the task at hand. He did the impossible without hesitation.

‘All right.’

Maetel poured strength into her body as she stood up. If Artpe had seen her, she was sure he would have been happy at how she was handling herself. He would have praised her. This thought allowed her to wade through anything that was thrown her way..

‘A little bit more! Shit! A little bit more!’

Artpe was panting right now. The girl was floating in the air a little bit as she was continuously showing reaction to the Mana.

Her skin had turned black before, but now it was the opposite. She enough white enough to be called pale, and even her hair had turned into a peculiar milk-like color. In truth, the Mana reaction she was experiencing was large and fierce. It was an indication that the current situation was unstable. It felt as if the situation could run away from him, and she would go on a rampage.

“O...oppa.”

“Hold on. You can do this.”

When Artpe saw her, he realized the truth that this wasn't just an adventure. This was why he couldn't give up now. The girl labored

as she opened her eyes to look at him. He gave her words of encouragement to lift her spirits, and he desperately guided her Mana.

‘The full sense of self that cannot be tampered. A body that isn’t sullied by the demonic energy.’

He dismantled the Mana that was causing changes to her record and structure. He destroyed the path laid in front of him as he promoted a new path. It was something impossible to do if he hadn’t possessed the Read All Creation ability and the Mana String.

He was using an Innate Ability and a Unique skill at the same time, so he was consuming an extreme amount of Mana. This was why he was having having a hard time breathing, and he felt dizzy. Still, he didn’t stop.

This wasn’t simply about saving a girl. The Demon King was trying some bullshit of a plan where he was trying to turn humans into demons. This was the first step in destroying the plan crafted by that petty and crafty coward!

The change that was turning Sienna into a demon had been occurring at a straightforward manner. The massive flow of Mana had been repeatedly moving forward before it gave way. Now that massive amount of Mana had come to a stop. It was a miracle.

“.....oppa.”

Artpe’s eyes suddenly flew open.

Someone was grabbing onto the edge of his robe. He didn’t even have to look to know who it was.

“.....you.”

The girl had opened her eyes, and she was looking at Artpe with a very faint smile on her face. Her Mana rushed towards the new path paved by Artpe.

Sienna had succeeding in learning the Mana Control!

[Sienna]

[Level : 1]

[Mana Control Lv1]

“So if I go this way.... It’ll be fine?”

“Ha. When I read that you were an experiment success, I recognized.....”

It seemed this girl had some talent in dealing with Mana. Artpe smirked as he had this thought. Silpennon had to pay 210 gold to purchase the Mana Control skill book. He probably would have felt aggrieved if he knew about this. However, this was great news for Artpe.

At her sense of achievement, he gave her a toothy smile as he spoke to her.

“Yes, let’s try this together once.”

“Yes, oppa.”

Artpe showed her the way, and Sienna tried hard to follow him. As her Mana went further down the path, it was changing the density of her Mana and the light within her. Her body was also being affected by the Mana, so small changes started appearing once again.

In the end, this wasn’t a path that would end with her becoming a human. However, the path wouldn’t lead her down the path to becoming a demon either. Her free will as a human had been successfully preserved. The only thing left was for her to confront the curse that was trying to turn her into a demon. When she rejected it, she would become something new!

‘If this is successful, I pretty much have a thesis that would be a big hit in the human world and demon world....!’

However, it didn’t matter which side he revealed the information

to. He couldn't tell anyone about this, because he would become the enemy of the world. He felt aggrieved at the fact that he couldn't reveal this information!

Artpe took out a Mana Potion, and he drank it. Then he added more fuel into controlling his Mana Strings.

He activated the Read All Creation to its limit. It revealed the path of the Mana within Sienna's body to his eyes. He merged this path with the Mana Strings, and he sealed all the circuitry related to the demon race. Then he guided her Mana.

Her body writhed, and her hair became luminous. However, Artpe and Sienna no longer paid attention to such changes. Sienna was handling her Mana for the first time, and she was drunk on the experience. Pain couldn't hold a candle to the joy of the Mana!

“Oppa.”

“You aren't too far off. Just a little bit more. You need to take one more step.”

“One step.. I just have to take one more step……!”

The trace energy of the demon race was slowly disappearing. As the circuitry for the demon race was sealed, a new Mana circuitry revealed itself.

It was a path that was neither human or demon. As she traveled further down the path, her Mana kept getting brighter as its constitution changed! When Artpe confirmed the changed, he unconsciously clenched his fist.

‘It's done……! It really worked!’

“I did it, oppa!”

It was Sienna's voice. It seemed she could also feel her curse being blocked.

In truth, he could no longer feel the energy of the Demon race within her. The only downside was the fact that he could barely

feel the energy of a human from her. It was enough for her not to run afoul of the Demon King's Innate ability!

“Kyahhhk!”

The circuitry was now complete. It passed through her entire body, and the Mana started circulating within her body at a rapid pace. It created a noisy sound that deafened everyone's ears.

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhh!”

“Ooh-goo-goohk.”

Artpe groaned as he desperately observed what was going on. It was the method that would allow one to escape the curse that made one into a demon. The method that would allow him to properly fuck over the Demon King was being engraved into Sienna's body in real time.

Above all things, It was a very valuable record. Maybe his reincarnation occurred, so he could learn this information!

In the next moment, a bright light was emitted from her body.

At the same time, a new information appeared in front of Artpe's eyes.

[Sienna]

[Level : 2]

[Race : Evil Reflector]

“Pffft.”

When he found out the name of her race, he let out a laugh. Evil Reflector? How can such a childish and obvious name could exist for a race! Was it because she was born by rejecting the Demon race! It made him want to go find god. Artpe wanted to ask what he was thinking when he made the name.

Still, he was happy. He was unsure if he could be happier than what he was feeling right now. This really was the first step to

destroy the ambitions possessed by the Demon King!

So this was it. This was why everyone wanted to become a hero! Artpe was feeling an emotion that clashed with him at a fundamental level, so he became self-absorbed in it. However, at that moment, someone tugged at his robe. Of course, it was Sienna.

“Oppa!”

“Yes, you did well.”

Artpe was breaking out in cold sweat as he smiled. He stroked her head as he comforted her. Her skin remained pale, and her hair was white too. However, her hair was lustrous. Unlike before, she was full of life energy and magical energy.

She had white skin, and white luminous hair. Sienna looked very alien, but this actually made look very charming.

She looked a little bit younger than Maetel, and the girl let out a bright and innocent smile towards her rescuer. She had met Artpe for the first time today, but the smile contained an unlimited amount of trust towards Artpe.

“Thank you, oppa”

“It’s nothing. I gained some very good data thanks to you. I should be the one thanking you.”

“Heh heh.”

From the moment Sienna started becoming a demon to the moment where she became an Evil Reflector, he had observed and recorded everything with his Read All Creation ability. Of course, it was still impossible for him, but this record would allow him to research a method to counter the demonifying curse. He might be able to come up with a method that’ll allow him to resist against the Demon King’s ability.!

“Sienna!”

“Unni.”

Artpe let go of Artpe’s robe, and she rested herself completely on the floor. She hugged her unni, who had run towards her.

Maetel had looked on with a nervous heart. She had been sad at the thought of one more child becoming a monster. Maetel and the other children were truly relieved at the sight.

“I’m glad you are fine.”

“It is all thanks to oppa. Oppa helped me.”

“.....mmmm.”

Maetel had a smile on her face. However, when she heard Sienna’s bright voice and face, she started creeping towards Artpe’s side. She grabbed his robe. There was still a smile on her face, but there was a sense of gloominess that was a small part of her expression.

“It is a relief that Sienna is fine. Right, Artpe?”

“It feels as if there is a smidge of regret in your voice, Maetel.”

“You are mistaken. I’m really happy. I want Aena and Sienna to live a happy life. At the town... Just the two of them...”

Mmm. It seemed he hadn’t been mistaken. Maetel was burning with jealousy towards a girl that was younger than her. Why was the hero wired like this! Artpe flicked Maetel’s forehead as he sighed.

Anyways, the Quest was complete. He couldn’t save the children that had already been turned into monsters. However, he couldn’t be sad about the missed opportunity. He decided it was right to be thankful for those that he was able to save with his hands. When he had this thought, he suddenly felt fatigue wash over his mind.

“.....ooh-ah. I want to rest.”

“Yes, Artpe. I really want to rest too.”

Artpe's words were heartfelt. Maetel let out a bitter laugh as she agreed with him. They looked at each other, and they started giggling. Then they turned to look at the children, who were staring at them in puzzlement.

"Let's go home."

"No. I want to wash myself first."

"I want to wash myself too!"

"I'm hungry!"

It seemed the fear that had gripped the children were gone thanks to Artpe's activities. As if they had made a promise beforehand, the children started expressing their desires. Soon, the communal space descended into chaos.

At that moment, a person with the all-round ability that could grant all their wishes made her entrance!

"It doesn't matter where or when. The Anywhere company is always with you. I am the merchant Mycenae! Please ask me for anything. I will fulfill your desires.... Oh my?"

Mycenae and Artpe looked at each other.

Mycenae put on a charming smile, and Artpe laughed as he asked her a question.

"Ajumma, did you acquire the cleaning magic as I've requested?"

Chapter 39 – Hero VS Kingdom (1)

Fortunately, Mycenae quickly restocked her supply of magic books after selling them in bulk to Artpe. All of them were sold to Artpe once again. It was a total of five books. She was reliable in the fact that she had acquired the Cleaning magic(45 gold).

“You guys should all gather around me. Cleaning!”

“I was cleaned in an instant!”

“My clothes are so soft and fluffy.”

This was the moment when Artpe took a step forward in becoming a lifestyle magician. Of course, a normal lifestyle magician couldn't clean a large group of over 300 people at once. Mycenae turned pale at the sight.

“You have a really large amount of Mana. Are you around level 300?”

“I told you not to dig in too much, right?”

Artpe's current level was 163. If he went by the standard of the Read All Creation ability, his Magic Points was above 800. It was the Magic Points he had in his previous life at level 200.

By that time, Artpe had already begun serving under the Demon King, and he had learned all the spells available. Of course, one had to take into consideration that Demon race naturally had overwhelmingly more magical energy. This was why the amount of magical energy he possessed right now was absurd.

He had been a demon in his previous life, but that was a flimsy explanation as to why he possessed so much magical right now. Artpe had been born with exceptional talent for magic, and it was at a level where the only plausible explanation was the fact that he was a hero.

If he dwelled more on that thought, it felt as if he would become

conceited by it. Therefore, he abandoned thinking about that subject. Conceit was the factor that always killed the Four Heavenly Kings! This was why he changed the subject.

“What did you do with Silpennon?”

“Even if I’m performing a scheduled task, I couldn’t stay away when the customers I am in charge of had just cleared another Dungeon. However.... I’m guessing this wasn’t a run of the mill Dungeon?”

“When did ajumma became in charge of us as clients..... Well, it clearly isn’t normal.”

She was a Dungeon Merchant, but this didn’t mean she had all the information regarding the Dungeon she will visit next. The Dungeon Merchants were given permission to mobilize when a pacified Dungeon had hidden treasures.

“It’s been awhile since the Dungeon Owner was exchanged from a monster to human. He had the Dungeon barrier up..... Since he is dead, it should have dissipated.”

Mycenae looked over the children gathered in this space, and she immediately picked up on what was going on.

“Ah-ha. So that’s what they were aiming for..... Oh wow. You were able to break it up. I’ll have to revise my opinion of you again.”

“You don’t have to revise it. No, just don’t look at me at all.”

“You are too much!?”

Maetel had killed him too quickly, but the black magician was around level 100. Normally, beginner heroes shouldn’t be able to take down a level 100 being! Maetel had shown enough force to kill a level 200 with a single blow. The black magician had been unlucky in facing Maetel as an opponent.

However, even after Maetel had defeated the black magician, the

monsters and the children who could turn into demons were still present. Mycenae was able to make her appearance only after Artpe got rid of all the potential risk factors.

“Customer, you surely aren’t thinking about ending our transaction after buying the spell books? I’m sure you are going to share in the Dungeon rewards with me, right?”

There were two types of Dungeons. There was the naturally occurring Dungeons and the artificial Dungeons. This Dungeon was a naturally occurring Dungeon. The magician who took over this place was proficient at black magic, but he hadn’t been talented at Dungeon exploration. This was why all the secret traps and rewards remained untouched.

This was what Mycenae was aiming for. Of course, since she had been able to find the items, Artpe would be able to find them too. This was why she decided to give up on fruitlessly searching further for more items. She wanted to immediately enter into a business transaction.

“Yes, if so.....”

Artpe looked at his surrounding. The level of the black magician, who had taken over this Dungeon, had to be discounted. It looked as if the original Dungeon boss had been a weak monster. Still, it wasn’t as if Artpe could not find any compensation using his Read All Creation ability.

“I’m hungry.”

“My stomach keeps growling.”

However, there was a problem that he had to deal with before he gathered the Dungeon rewards. He looked at the children who looked as if they could drop at any moment. Artpe sighed as he threw a gold coin towards Mycenae.

“First, I want you to give them something to eat. The children were starved for couple days, so I want you to give them food that

wouldn't be too much of a burden on them.”

“Oh my. You are so kind. As it happens, I have a consumable item that was developed by the mage tower to be used on war refugees. However, there is a single down side.....”

“I'll give you an additional gold.”

“As always, thank you very much, customer!”

Mycenae distributed the items to the children with the help of Maetel and Aena.

Sienna had experienced a sudden physical change. She was changed into an existence that didn't get hungry much. This was why Sienna helped out in the distribution. Of course, Mycenae showed interest in her.

“Oh my. You have very pretty hair.”

“I want you to give me an artifact that can conceal her identity.”

“I was wondering why you haven't asked me about that. You always seems to meet people of suspect origin. Or maybe those kinds of people are drawn to you?”

“Ha.”

Artpe snorted at Mycenae's words as he went around the communal space. Every time he disturbed a location a wooden box would suddenly appear out of thin air or the lichen growing in the cracks of the Dungeon's wall would let out a strange light.

He went to four locations to gather the rewards, but as expected, they weren't worth much.

“It should be around 29 gold.”

“Yes, here is your 29 gold. Also, this is a bonus for my dear customer.”

Artpe handed off all the items, and he received a small hairpin from her. It was a metal adornment shaped like a butterfly.

“This stops the magical energy reaction from leaking out. The artifact has a very simple function, but it should be enough for the girl.”

Mycenae had decided this item was enough for Sienna. Her hair and skin was unusual, but it could be dismissed as being not too out of the ordinary for a girl of her age.

“I want one Crystal Ball of Blessing.”

However, Artpe had other ideas.

“You want that too!? Is it because this child is a demon?”

Mycenae was shocked. She tried to get a closer look at Sienna, but Artpe didn't allow any further inquiry. In the end, Mycenae pouted as she handed him a Crystal Ball of Blessing for 500 gold.

“Well, this is the end to our transaction. You should head back for now.”

“How can you push me out so coldly every time like this? Still, I won't give up. I'll someday make you the king of the business world! You better be prepared for it!”

“Ajumma, don't try to steal Artpe!”

“I told you to stop doing that.”

After Mycenae made another loud commotion, he put away the Crystal Ball of Blessing.

Sienna stared at him as she asked him a question

“Oppa, what is that for?”

It seemed she had become sensitive to Mana when she was turned into a Evil Reflector. It seemed she was very interested in the artifact.

Artpe let out a small laugh as he stroked her head.

“I'll tell you about it a little bit later.”

“Yes!”

A short amount of time had passed. All the children were brought outside, and Artpe returned the children to the townspeople. In a flash, a reunion filled with tears occurred....

“Mommyyyyy!”

“Son! M...my son!”

Fortunately, most of the children taken from this particular town were all safe. The townspeople were deeply moved by the return of the children, so they started praising Artpe and Maetel. However, Artpe gave them a warning as he looked at them with serious eyes.

“If you spread our name, I’ll put a curse on all of you. The curse will turn you into frogs.”

“Heek!”

Heroes were always targeted by repeat Quests, and these Quests would cheapen the value of their names! Of course, the Demon King had created a perfect recipe in the past where these repeat Quests helped along the explosive growth of the hero as an unintended consequence. However, the current situation differed quite a lot from the past.

Since he was now aware of the fact that Demon King was hatching such a horrifying plan, they would have to move carefully. A disguise and a mask was a must. They also had to be prepared to bury such fake identities in the darkness.

“The problem is.....”

Artpe gave a stern warning then he turned around. There were still couple hundred children left.

“Hyung, I want to see my mom too.”

“B...be quiet. We shouldn’t cause more trouble for the magician-nim!”

“Heeng. Mom. Mommy~”

He had no problem with the children who were originally from

this town. However, he wondered what he should do with the children captured from the other towns.

Of course, they would have to be returned to their own towns. If he was like the heroes from the old stories, he wouldn't have hesitated. He would have personally returned the children to each town. However, the Quest had ended, so he needed to move onto his next goal.

.....this kind of event always led to a more annoying and larger incidents. The Demon King's scheme always seemed to come in succession!

Of course, the Demon King was a chef that tried to get a richer flavor by cooking an already seared meat once again..... Artpe was well aware of the Demon King's far-reaching recipes, so he was annoyed at being at the receiving end of it!

'I have to nip this in the bud. It would be stupid of me to be satisfied with leaving the matter as is when I know more will come from this. Moreover....'

In the end, Artpe came to a firm resolution.

If he let his heart make the decision, he would have ended his association with the townspeople here. He wanted to go rest. However, if he didn't tie this up right now, he knew he would become more exhausted by what stemmed from this event in the future.

"You guys should move your town."

In the end, a suggestion popped out of his mouth. The townspeople became dumbfounded at his words.

"You want us to move our town? Why? No, how?"

"I'll be going around to the towns where these children are from. I'll be gathering all the townspeople from there. I want to consolidate everyone into forming a large town. You guys will create a small city."

“W...we can't do that!”

“That'll be too hard!”

“We are already living a hard life here!”

He expected their objections. However, Artpe's attitude didn't change.

“If you want your children to be stolen again, you can continue on living here. You all have to stick together right now. You have to stick together to grow your numbers. You won't be able to win against a country, but at the very least, you will have grown your own presence. You have to be large enough where many people will become aware it if something happens to you.”

If enough humans were gathered in a single location, it might have an effect on other entities. It would be hard for the Archduke to mess with them.

It would also make it harder for the Demon King's army to hatch a scheme. They were able to gather and put a curse on the children as experiments, because they were able to steal the children in secret.

“I...if we move our residences, how are we going to feed ourselves?”

“You already had a hard time making a living here. Do you think much will change if you move? You'll either farm or hunt for game. That isn't my problem.”

Artpe had other things to do. He had to ruin the Archduke. Furthermore, he had to ruin the black magicians that were messing with the entire country.

At the climax of this Quest, couple Demons would probably make their appearances. However, he was confident that he could kill them. Maetel had awoken to her Innate ability. It would be possible to do so with her help!

‘I’ll have to ruin a kingdom before I kill the Demon King. Mmmm. All right. I kind of feel like a Four Heavenly King again.’

He couldn’t shake the feeling that something was out of joint. However, this actually made him quite happy.

Maetel looked at him with unshakable trust, and Sienna looked up at him as if he was her idol. Aena and the numerous children looked on with worried eyes. The townspeople looked to be in a state of shock and fear at Artpe’s forceful order.

“Well, we’ll start our city construction plan from this point on!”

It was at that moment when the first Quest turned into a succession of scenario Quest.

Chapter 40 – Hero VS Kingdom (2)

Under Artpe's unexpected edict, the townspeople made preparations to leave. They were close to tears. Since they had given up most of their fortunes to Artpe (there wasn't much aside from Obsidian of Greed), so they only had to pack some clothes.

"We'll sleep here tonight, and we'll head out immediately tomorrow. I want all of you to take care of the children until then."

"Understood, magician-nim."

"Ho-ooh. I know magician-nim isn't wrong, but the prospect of building a new house is frustrating....."

It would have been better if they had grounds to dismiss Artpe's claims as total nonsense. However, Artpe had brought back the children even when he wasn't given much as a reward. This was why they decided to pin their trust upon him..

This was why they continued their preparation for their big migration even as they shed tears. Their hearts burned as if they had eaten mustard. Still, it was better to be worked like a dog than actually being dead.

"I'll see you tomorrow, oppa!"

"Good night, noona!"

"Hoo-uhng, ooh-uh-uhng. Mommy."

Of course, Artpe knew their pain. How could he not?

He watched the townspeople people break up as they shuttled the crying children away.

'If they do band together to grow in size, there's a chance they'll be able to escape the influence of the demons. Of course, when that occurs they'll try to find other ways to acquire more children.....'

Artpe and Maetel's role was to stop this business from getting

any larger. He would overlooked most calamities. However, he had to get in on this or it might swallow the whole human world.

“This is the hero’s walk of life. If not for heroes, others wouldn’t be able to sense such enormous crisis, and they wouldn’t know how to overcome it. It isn’t as if the human world doesn’t have strong people. However, the trouble makers are hidden until the heroes can find them. It is like a game of hide and seek.”

When the hero finds them, they proudly reveal themselves as if to say ‘I’m ready now!’

They were sons of bitches amongst sons of bitches.

“Do you think this is happening in other regions, Artpe?”

“I hope not, but it is possible. This is why this is so annoying.”

At Artpe’s reply, Maetel’s eyes turned menacing. Since this was a problem where his safety wasn’t involved, he had expected her to laugh off most of his words. She had a very forgiving nature, yet her face was filled with rage right now.

“We have to beat them up. Everyone who tries to make children into monsters are bad!”

It seemed her mental attitude had gone through a fundamental change after what she experienced within the Dungeon. Artpe was bitter and happy about it at the same time. Still, he had to calm her down right now.

“You shouldn’t work yourself up too much, Maetel... You’ll see much worse in the future.”

Maetel didn’t reply to his words. She extended her hand to firmly grip his sleeve. He extended a hand to stroke her head. At that moment, another girl grabbed his other sleeve.

It was none other than Sienna.

“Oppa. Oppa should come to our house and sleep.”

“Yes, magician-nim. Our humble.... It is a very humble house,

but if you don't mind, we will take you in for the night."

Maetel sent a guarded look towards the two girls. The hand that had been petting her head suddenly turned into a light blow to her head with his knuckles.

"Ouch."

While Maetel gripped her head in pain, Artpe grabbed Sienna's offered hand as he gave his reply.

"We'll impose ourselves on you guys for a day. As it happens, I have something I have to give you."

"Really? Yes!"

Sienna let out an innocent laugh as she rejoiced.

Artpe couldn't help but laugh alongside with her.

He would have to sweet talk another girl with a plausible story.

This was how he came to reside in the two girl's house for a night. They had lost their parents, so the two girls lived in a very small and old house. It was in disrepair. It would actually be much less work to build a new hut than repair this one.

After he unpacked his gear, Artpe called for Sienna. He gave her a small crystal ball. It was none other than the Crystal Ball of Blessing.

"Here, take it. This is yours."

"Oppa, you bought it for me!?"

Sienna hadn't figured out the exact use of the Crystal Ball of Blessing yet. However she was sensitive to Mana after she became an Evil Reflector. This was why she was aware that a very complex structure of Mana was contained within the Crystal Ball of Blessing.

"Oppa, isn't this really expensive?"

"I'm not giving it to you for free. You have to repay me later with

a lot of interests. It'll be a compound interest."

"Yes, I understand!"

Since she didn't know how scary compound interest was, Sienna let out a naive smile as she replied. She took the crystal from him. Soon, she had a slightly peculiar expression on her face.

"Oppa, it feels as if it is exploring inside me."

"It is a substitute for the priests, and it'll decide your future path. It'll make a record of you in this world. You'll know when it adapts to you."

"Y...yes."

After awakening as an Evil Reflector, she had already learned the Mana Control. Of course, he expected her to receive the Magician Class without much problem

However....

[Sienna]

[Level ? 1]

[Evil Reflector]

[Warrior Priestess]

".....?"

".....?"

Sienna found out her Class, and when he saw it, Artpe's eyes turned round. Maetel and Aena didn't know what was going on so they looked on absentmindedly. The only thing different was the fact that the crystal ball was now glinting.

It would probably be of help in advancing in her high rank Class..... No, that wasn't important right now!

"Oppa, what happened.....?"

"I'm not sure either."

If she wasn't a magician, who on this land was actually suited to become a mage! Moreover, she had escaped her humanity to become a new race that didn't exist in history, yet she was a priestess!

Artpe was so taken aback by this that he wanted to run out of the house. However, his Read All Creation ability hadn't malfunctioned. Instead, her record as a Warrior Priestess was shown clearly in front of his eyes. There was no doubt Sienna was a Warrior Priestess!

Sienna firmly grabbed Artpe's clothes as she asked him a question.

"Oppa, does this mean I have to enter into a temple?"

"You must never do that."

At Sienna's naive question, Artpe gave an immediate answer. Even if a Warrior Priestess was an occupation welcomed by everyone, she wasn't human anymore. There was no way she would be able to enter into the very close-minded temples. If Artpe thought about their temperament, it would be fortunate if Sienna wasn't dissected for study.

Priests weren't priests, because they had a good heart. Priests followed a specific way of training that had been passed down through time. People had researched a way to suck up to selfish gods in an attempt to obtain a boon from them. This was how they awakened to the holy power to become priests!

This was why she was in an impossible situation.

'Her Mana has progressed in a special direction. It's a holy power that directly opposes evil.... It is a likely hypothesis.'

The name of her race was Evil Reflector, and the name was quite explicit. It also outlined the direction of her development. She had been optimized to fight against the demon race. She was so amazing that it wouldn't have been strange if she had been chosen

as hero.

He wonder what would happen if she was given the opportunity to grow up. She was born from an experiment that had tried to turn her into a demon. She would now stand in the front line in defeating the Demon race. It was the biggest way to screw over the Demon King. Moreover, it would allow Artpe's original goal to.....

“.....Sienna.”

Artpe felt a small amount of self-hatred as he bit his lips. However, he had already handed over the Crystal Ball of Blessing to her, so he was being hypocritical by wavering between his decision. He kept eye contact with Sienna as he spoke.

“You probably lived a normal life until now. If this incident hadn't occurred, you would have continued to live a normal life. However, the direction of your life has changed in no uncertain terms. In the process, you gained considerable amount of power and potential. Now that you have that power it'll be hard for you to lead a normal life.”

At the very least, it wouldn't be possible until the disturbance caused by the Demon King could be put to sleep. Sienna was a very bright child, so she fully understood what Artpe was talking about.

“Yes. Thank you, oppa. I also want to live a different life. I want to become stronger like oppa. I don't want to be abused by bad people any longer.”

It was truly courageous words. Artpe wonder if what she experienced here had hardened her heart.

Maybe, her mental state was affected when she was changed into a new race. He just had to hope that he had led her down a better path than becoming a demon..

“The problem is the power you possess is different from theirs. The power is unique and alien. This is the reason why I gave you the Crystal Ball of Blessing. People are afraid of those that are

different from them. You'll probably be unable to display your full power out in the open."

"Oppa, what should I do?"

She went to the heart of the matter. As Sienna asked her question, it seemed she had an idea what the answer would be. This was why there was a look of anticipation on her face.

This was why kids these days were scary. Artpe had this thought as he turned to look at Maetel. It looked as if Maetel really didn't like the current situation. In the end, she nodded with a sullen expression on her face.

She didn't want someone else to get between Artpe and her. However, Maetel knew Sienna couldn't be left behind now. Since her feelings were so transparent, it was a bit amusing to see it.

Artpe smirked as he turned to look at Sienna.

Then he suggested a way forward for her.

".....do you want to join our party?"

"Yes!"

As if she had been waiting for this question, she let out a bright smile as she gave her answer. Artpe had asked the question, but he was taken aback by her embarrassingly frank answer.

".....your whole life depends on this decision. Are you sure you ok making such a decision so easily?"

"Yes!"

"You can't!"

At that moment, Aena interjected herself into the conversation as she screeched. She had finally been able to recover her younger sister, yet she was now worried that Sienna would go to a distant place. However, Sienna had anticipated her unni's objection, so she spoke with a bright smile on her face.

“Unni, don’t worry too much about it. I’m all right. As time passes, I’ll feel much better.”

“Sienna…….”

“If you are with me, I’m sure it’ll become difficult for you. You saw it, unni. I’m not normal anymore.”

As her words ended, a white magical energy was emitted at the tip of Sienna’s fingers. Artpe could clearly see a light that was similar to holy power. Moreover, the amount of magical energy possessed by her was disparate from her status as a level 1.

“I...I...”

“Unni. You can do this alone too, right?”

Aena’s expression darkened, but Sienna’s expression remained clear. There was a thread of resoluteness that could be seen in her bright smile. Aena realized Sienna wasn’t trying to convince her of anything. She was just notifying Aena of what would be happening.

Sienna had always been a fierce girl that spoke her mind.

“We won’t be apart forever. I’ll come back. I promise. So you have to wait for me. Ok?”

“Sienna.... Are you really going to come back to me?”

In the end, Aena declared her defeat. Sienna let out a bright laughter as she tightly hugged Aena.

“Yes, I promise.”

“Sienna……!”

“This is quite a nice sight, so I’m sorry to have to say this. We are going to travel together until this Quest ends.”

“Ah. That’s right.”

Artpe poured vinegar on the situation. The two sisters had embarrassed expressions on their faces. Maetel giggled.

The night came to an end in a town that'll be gone tomorrow.

Chapter 41 - Hero VS Kingdom (3)

He had a dream.

It was a land of despair where everything was dyed with blood and darkness. He stood face to face with her on top of a castle wall made through the pain and suffering of people.

No, it was a too one-sided encounter to call it a face to face meeting.

Artpe had already lost to the hero. All his magic spells had been blocked by their magician. He had thrown his daggers in desperation, but an archer with long ears destroyed all of them with her sharp arrows.

Normally, his subordinates were lazy, and they had treated his authority as their commanding general as shit. However, they acted in a way that was incongruous to their past actions. His subordinates fought desperately to protect him, but in the end, they were easily slain by the warrior's great sword. If they had always done well as they did right now, their actions wouldn't have felt sudden and unexpected to Artpe. They decided to act in such a way at the last moment, and it almost brought tears to Artpe's eyes.

“Don't do it. Wait a moment. Don't swing that.”

“Hero…….”

The steel knight, who never took off his helmet, refused to stop. He was about to sever Artpe's head. However, the hero desperately halted his action.

All the other members inside the hero's party let out a sigh at the same time. The hero paid no attention to them as she stepped forward. She made a sincere entreaty towards Artpe.

“Please don't cause any trouble, and surrender to us, Four Heavenly King Artpe Hirtana Kelduke. There is no need for us to

fight each other any longer.”

“Hero! You!”

“It is impossible.”

“Everyone be quiet…… Please surrender yourself.”

Artpe hadn't been hostile towards the hero from the beginning. She was the only one that was aware of this fact. Artpe had watched over the hero for a very long time, and she was aware of this fact too. If Artpe had wanted to, the hero knew he could have killed her a long time ago.

This was why they could be on the same side. She was sure they could be on the same side. They.....

“You speak as if the Demon King's army isn't on a campaign to bring peace to the world.”

However, Artpe made light of the hero's words as he mocked her. His sharp purple eyes were half hidden by his drooping black hair. It wasn't just the hero. His eyes twinkled as if he was mocking the entire hero's party.

“Why……?”

She asked the question as if she couldn't understand him. However, Artpe didn't give her an answer.

He didn't want to stop the hero's steps. A heavy burden was already on her slender shoulders, and he didn't want to add more to her burden.

Instead, he tried to relax her contorted face a little bit. He let out a grin as he opened his mouth.

““Hero. I'm pretty sure a very good looking noonim will be coming here soon, and she'll be very angry when she sees my corpse. I want you to give her this message.”

His words were very comedic when one considered it to be his last words. It made the hero's face scrunch up. Unlike her, the

members of the hero's party thought Artpe was scheming to screw over the hero. This was why they started moving before Artpe could finish his skit.

The Warrior unsheathed and gripped his great sword. The magician held a staff that looked too heavy for her even if she was holding it with both hands. She prepared a spell. The archer pointed an arrow towards Artpe. The red haired thief rushed towards Artpe with his daggers drawn.

They all treasured the hero above all else. They wanted to shield her from the fucked up truths that dominated the world.

“Don't try to confuse her, Four Heavenly King.”

“In truth, I.... Kuh-huhk!”

The dagger scored a clean hit. Artpe had already exhausted his magical energy, and his defensive gear were all broken. His consumable artifacts were all used up. Artpe could no longer put up a fight, so he exposed his heart to the dagger of the thief.

Yes, he already knew this would happen.

“In truth, I'm not too fond of older women... Kahk. Please tell her...!”

His vision was being dyed black. He could feel Etna's Mana swell from afar. She was the commander of the Army of Thieves.

‘Ah, if I was going to die anyways, I shouldn't have called noo-nim here.’

He had such useless thoughts as he died.

“This makes you... It makes you seem like a normal person....!”

He could hear the tearful voice of the hero as he was at death's door. Her voice somehow made his chest burn.

However, he couldn't turn back the time. This was a story that had already ended.

This was how his previous life came to an end.

Artpe's Innate ability had reversed the world, and he opened his eyes from within a small human body. He wanted to hurry up and wake up from the nightmare that rehashed the past events.....

“No…… Nooooooooooooooooooooo!”

He heard a female's scream. It was the voice that he had heard during the last moments of his previous life.

Wait a moment.

Who's voice of despair was it……?

“……ah.”

Artpe opened his eyes. His ears were deafened by the sound. It was the worst kind of nightmare.

He had a harsh expression on his face as he tried to get up. However, his body was strangely heavy, so he looked down. Maetel and Sienna had fallen asleep from exhaustion after they had a territorial fight over his abdomen.

He looked to the side, and he saw Aena who had gotten up early. She glared at him with white eyes. She was looking at him as if he was a convicted criminal.

“……well, I'm popular. What can I do about it?”

“Hmmp!”

Aena's cheeks were puffed out as she quickly turned her head away. Artpe let out a bitter laugh when he saw her. Then he woke up the two brats that clung to him like koalas. It was time to head out now.

When the morning brightened, the townspeople and the children were led out the town by Artpe and Maetel. Since all of them had packs on their backs, it looked as if they were refugees. Fortunately, it was late spring, so the weather was mild.

“Mmm. We are quite noticeable. That’s great..”

“Isn’t it bad if we are noticed, Artpe?”

Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked the question. Artpe let out a light laugh as he gave an explanation.

“That only applies when we are exploring a Dungeon where we have no idea if strong enemies are present or not. However, we know that there are only level 100 cast offs inside this region. This is why it would be more convenient if they scouted and came towards us.”

“I see!”

When their enemies caught sight of the group, they would immediately attack the party. In such a scenario, Maetel would be able to cut them down without being repulsed by what she had to do.

Artpe didn’t explain any further as he expanded his Mana Threads into a wide net. This wasn’t something like feeling an ominous feeling when one was being watched or ambushed. He would be able to know who was going to attack him. At the very least, it would allow him to prepare a counterattack.

As he controlled a massive amount of Mana, he directed a question towards the nearby Village Person A.

“So which village is closest to this location?”

“The village doesn’t have an official name.... If we go past that hill, we’ll be there.”

The town didn’t have a name. These towns were so unimportant that it would probably not be recorded in the hero’s chronicle. They went to several of these villages as they gathered more people. Moreover, they cleared out all the soldiers and black magicians they encountered....

The Quest Reward would continue to bottom out.

The thought of it made him sad. However, even if the Quest Reward was garbage now, he had to go through it to get to the next stage of this Quest. This was the charm of a chained Quest, so he had to endure it.

‘Still, I hope this ends before the summer of this year. I want to avoid what always occurs in the fall.....’

If he went by the schedule, they had plenty of time. They would have enough time even if they ran in place going nowhere for four years. Even if such delays occurred, Maetel would probably learn skills like Jump and all the techniques associated with it. She was scary like that.

The problem right now was the fact that the world and the monsters changed depending on the seasons. There were monsters that were calm in the spring, and they would cause trouble in the summer. Then there were the monsters that attacked after the fall harvest in the winter. They attacked to steal the food of the humans. Artpe was trying to proceed on a specific route, and there were those on this route that would be affected by the seasons..

‘If Silpennon is able to grow up quickly, I can use him. No, it might be faster to develop this one. ’

On one side of him, a lovely white-haired girl was grabbing onto his sleeve like Maetel. He smirked as he looked down at her.

She was skilled enough to control her Mana, and under his tutelage, she was emitting a white colored Mana. She was moving it around with one hand. Her skill level was better than him in his previous life. She had ridiculous amount of potential. Why were there only geniuses around him!

The genius pouted as she looked up at Artpe.

“This is tiring, oppa.”

“Mana is nature. If you accept nature as being Mana, nature will soon become one with your Mana. It will fill you up.”

“Ok. I’ll try harder.”

Demons possessed overwhelming more Mana compared to humans. After consuming Mana, Demons also had a much faster recovery time. The reason for this difference was the fact that the Demon race looked at Mana in a fundamentally different way than humans.

No matter how much he explained it, humans were unable to understand the perspective seen by the Demon race. There were magicians in historical records that were barely able to understand this truth after many years. This foundation allowed them to be able to compete against Demons.

In his past life, the magician from the hero’s party understood this perspective. It was thanks to this magician that the Demon race’s strongholds in the human world was all brought down. Any Demon that got in her way had died. In truth, Artpe was more afraid of the magician than the hero in his previous life.

“Ah. It quickened a little bit. Oppa, it is as if the Mana is smiling at me!”

“.....yes, I see. So that’s how it is.”

In this life, it seemed there would be at least one more terrifying prodigy that would be on par with that magician.

Artpe wonder why such a monster-like prodigy like Sienna hadn’t made a name for herself in his previous life.

He stroked the head of the girl that was smiling brightly at him.

“Ughhhh, Artpe. I....I want to learn Mana.....”

“Maetel, you are already pretty good at handling Mana.....”

In short order, they arrived at the first town. The town had been in a rut, since they had lost all their children. They rejoiced when they saw the safely returned children. They also cried for the children that would never make it back to them. Then they became

shocked at Artpe's edict to leave their town.

"I....I can't do this!"

"Of course, you saved my child, so I'll give you compensation as thanks. However, I can't abandon the village...."

"We won't force you to do this. However, if you all continue to live like this, the soldiers will steal your children once again. Shall I give you more bad news? They won't hesitate to torture you for information regarding my party. They will kill several of you as an example."

"O...our king would never....."

"There is a different king on the throne."

"W...what!?"

The people discussed the topic in a heated fashion, and sides were formed. The people that lost then recovered their children followed Artpe and Maetel's lead. The rest stayed behind. Since the children obediently followed Artpe and Maetel, the townspeople decided to put their trust in them.

"If the soldiers come asking questions, you guys tell them everything you saw here."

"I...if we do that, magician-nim will...."

"It's all right. You tell them everything. You can even tell me what I'm trying to accomplish. It is better than you guys dying just because you hid the information."

"Magician-nim.....!"

The people remaining behind in the town had rejected Artpe, yet he was being considerate towards them!

Of course, he didn't think the soldiers would let the townspeople live even if the townspeople told them everything. However, Artpe had given them a fighting chance. He had done enough for these idiots who had basically forfeited their lives, because they were

afraid of change.

It took several days, but Artpe's party toured all the nearby villages. Most towns reacted similarly to each other, and the people who lost their children showed strong feelings towards Artpe.

"My child! What happened to my child!"

"You did it! I bet you killed my child!"

Artpe understood their rage, so he didn't get mad. Maetel had been restless over the situation, and she had done well holding herself back until now. However, her composure broke when she met the parents of the dead children.

"No, it isn't like that. When we found the children, they were already....."

"That's enough, Maetel."

They were unfairly placing the blame on Artpe. Maetel had emerged from this tragedy alongside him, so it would have been weird if Maetel wasn't agitated by the current situation.

However, the truth would place the people in more danger. If townspeople decided to stay behind, they were told the children were kidnapped, and some had died under unfortunate circumstances.

He left it at that.

"I was too late to save them. I'm very sorry. I have no excuses."

Artpe spoke only those words. Deception and disdain were necessary skills for the Four Heavenly King, but he briefly put away those skills. Right now he had to use an essential skill used by swindlers. He pushed forward with his version of the story. There were omissions, so he wasn't technically lying.

It was enough.

"Eek. Eeeek....."

“Koo-hoohk..... We already know you aren’t at fault. However, if we accept that as fact then who should we hate!”

“Hoohk..... My baby.... My baby.....!”

In the end, many people rejected Artpe’s offer. He was a being that possessed mysterious powers, and that fact was enough for to be ostracised by them.

On the other hand, the people who accepted his help stuck very close to him. Artpe had to be satisfied with that fact.

Still, Maetel’s heart hurt as she took in everything.

“Artpe.”

“No one here is at fault, Maetel. The people who are dishing out the hate and the people who are receiving the hate aren’t at fault. Sometimes screwed up situations like this occurs. In truth, this is some of what happens in real life.”

The war in his previous life was similar. Even if the Demons didn’t want to fight, they had no choice thanks to the Innate ability of the Demon King. A kindhearted girl had to repeatedly fight horrific battles just because fate had chosen her to be the hero.

What happened in her past life was about to be repeated in her present life. He had no other words he could say except that it was screwed up.

“Ooh-ooooo. All right.”

Maetel understood the meaning behind his words, so she suppressed her emotions. This in turn increased the frequency of her sneaking into his arms when he slept. Sienna unnecessarily burned with a strong sense of rivalry, so she stuck close to Artpe too. It just made Artpe exhausted.

There were a lot of words and troubles exchanged, but all the people were gathered in a week. There were around 2,000 people

gathered.

It took them an additional two days to search for a land that would be suitable for them to live on. They ended up at the mid-slope of a hill where monsters rarely appeared.

“So are we supposed to build the town here, magician-nim? No, I guess we have to call it a small city.”

“There are two thousand people here. I wonder if this many people can really live here.....”

“I’ll help you build your city. Don’t worry too much about it.”

A large number of people came here, because they looked up toward Artpe and Maetel. It looked as if Artpe felt a bit abashed when he scratched his nose as he spoke. However, his inner thought differed a little bit from his outward appearance.

‘Since I’ve made a bait this large, a large fish should be biting it soon.’

This was how the city construction started.

The fish became aware of this without delay.

Chapter 42 - Hero VS Kingdom (4)

There were 2,000 people, but a thousand of them were children who couldn't work. Still, they were making great progress in carving out a small city at the middle of the small mountain. All the tasks that couldn't be done through the power of the people was solved by Artpe. Of course, he used his Mana Strings.

"T...the mountain is collapsing."

"It is being pulverized."

"The forest..... An entire forest is being swallowed up....."

The Mana Strings consumed a lot of Mana. However, the large consumption rate became a problem only in battle where every minute and every second mattered. Since no one had chased after them yet, he had plenty of time. He had the luxury to be able to use the Mana Strings to his heart's content. This was possible because his Mana recovery rate had increased compared to his days as a Demon.

Artpe used his Mana Strings every time his Mana recovered. He carved the mountain, dug up the ground or he processed the trees. He had had cut down the forest in its entirety.

Naturally, the townspeople started looking up to Artpe as if he was like a godlike figure.

"He isn't human."

"I've seen magicians before, but they weren't like this."

"Did you just see that? He extended his hand once, and twenty trees just fell."

When the large-scale construction came to an end, the townspeople firmed the ground, and they started gathering the fallen trees to create building materials. They were doing minor tasks compared to what Artpe was doing. This resulted in a city

being created at an incredible speed.

The ground was flattened in a half-day, and buildings started going up after another half-day. The people that weren't of help in the construction were given the task of gathering food. They were sent out into the mountain.

Just the same, Artpe filled up the food stores when they didn't bring back enough.

How did he do so?

“Customer, who do you think I am!”

He did it through the veteran merchant Mycenae of the Anywhere company.

“You are someone convenient to use in various situations.”

“If you were a little bit more circumspect with your words, I might have agreed with your sentiment!”

“Ah. I want you to leave behind your cheapest rations. I need enough for 3,000 meals. Tsk. I don't have much money left after purchasing the Crystal Ball of Blessing.... I'll have to empty out another Dungeon soon.”

“You just straight up ignored my words.....”

Dungeon merchants rarely appeared outside of a normal Dungeon. The rules changed a little bit when one bought a voucher from them. It was possible for one to trade with a Dungeon merchant outside.

In this particular case, Maetel and Artpe had cleared out the Dungeon located within this mountain. Mycenae found out about it since she designated herself as the merchant in charge of dealing with them. She had shown up like a phantom that was haunting them, and Artpe had pulled her outside of the Dungeon to make a deal.

“You are young, yet I've never met a customer with so little

manners. In five years, I'm sure you will make many women cry thanks to your unruly heart."

"I'll probably be the one crying. Maetel would have beaten me with a club before it could reach that point."

"Hmmm."

Mycenae narrowed her eyes as she glared at him.

"As expected, you like her?"

"Are you trying to meddle in the love life of a customer?"

"If you don't have particular feeling towards her, I might put some of my spit on you to call dibs."

"By the time I grow up, the spit you put on me would have dried up, and there would be no trace of it left."

Artpe snorted when he saw Mycenae's ears flutter around. If one took compliments from merchants at face value, it'll lead one to bankruptcy in the end.

However, his face hardened a little bit at her next words.

"I really want to hold the title of being a lover of a hero at least once."

For a brief moment, Artpe froze in place when he heard her words. Should he dodge the statement? Should he deny it? He mulled over it, but there was only one answer he could give from the start.

She wasn't fishing for information. She was sure of her own claim. He had always had a feeling in the past that Mycenae knew about their status as heroes. If he denied the claim, it would cause unnecessary difficulties for both sides.

In the end, Artpe shrugged his shoulders as he replied towards Mycenae.

"That's right. We were quite skillful in keeping it a secret up

until now.”

“Of course, However, I’ve already realized it from the outset. Haven’t our meetings been quite coincidental after our first meeting? I tried very hard not to unnecessarily arouse your attention.”

“Why are you bringing this up right now?”

He had a decent idea on why, but Artpe spoke in a sullen manner. Mycenae chuckled as she spoke.

“I believe you have a modicum of trust in me now. I want to establish a firm cooperative relationship. Moreover... You already know this, right? It doesn’t matter which Dungeon you enter. I drop everything I have going on to beat all the other merchants in showing up in front of you. It was my way of keeping both your identities a secret. In truth, I deserve thanks for doing such a task.”

“Didn’t you do it to monopolize the trades with us, since we are heroes with bright futures? Wasn’t it an attempt to increase your profit?”

“Of course, that is my ultimate goal.”

Mycenae boldly acknowledged that fact. Then she added more to her explanation.

“However, I also do not want the Demon King to take over the world. This is why I tried my best to protect the two heroes from being solicited by unnecessary people. It is a task where my practical interests and doing the right thing intersects.”

“Hmmm…….”

“In truth, I confirmed my suspicions when I saw all of this today.”

Mycenae spoke as she pointed towards the construction site of the small city. A large number of people were embarking on a new life. Everyone thought the construction of the city would be

difficult, but Artpe's complete support had made the job much easier. Thanks to his help there were very few people that complained.

"I thought you only went around smashing Dungeons, but you are doing very hero-like tasks. Every person here has absolute trust in you, and they rely on you. This also made me confident that I could trust and rely on you, customer."

"It is very unexpected to hear such words from a Dungeon Merchant. Don't you guys put profit above all else?"

"All the more reason to put my trust in you"

Mycenae let out an alluring laugh as she spoke.

"Customers like you let out an always radiant light, and many people get tangled in that light. It isn't a coincidence that heroes are the bane of the Demon King, In a chaotic world, the only ones able to bring the hearts of the people together are the heroes."

"Hoong."

Heroes unite the hearts of the people? Heroes weren't religious leaders. If one discounted their abilities, heroes were normal human beings. Other people did as they liked by relying on the heroes. It was a one-sided and disgusting relationship. He didn't have such a relationship with the people here, so it seemed she was under some delusion.

".....yes, it would be convenient to have someone I can trust too."

However, Artpe didn't have to go out of his way to shatter such delusions. She could package her sweet words in every which way, but in the end, it was a business relations.

This was why this relationship had to be based strictly on profits and losses. Emotions didn't have to enter into the calculations. He erased the countless thoughts he had been thinking. He let out a light laugh as he extended his hand towards Mycenae.

“Soul Contract. I’m sure you came here prepared with one.”

“Of course. I had a very hard time, since the efficacy of the contract had to be high. I had a very hard time coming up with a story for the headquarters of the company.....”

“A cost of the contract is usually split between the two parties. However, since you’ve suggested it first, you should take on an additional 10% of the cost. I’ll pay 40%.”

“Your calculations are always precise.....”

Mycenae pouted as she brought out the contract. Artpe put his index finger on it, and he dragged it across the contract. The basic outline of the contract had already been created. As his fingers scanned over the contract, conditions were modified, added and deleted.

“It isn’t just me. You are forbidden to talk about anyone I deem to be an ally. From this point on, that will be Maetel, Sienna, Silpennon, Leseti and me.”

“However, once you start encountering more and more people, there is a danger of me being in breach of contract without meaning to.”

“If it is a situation where they will find out even if you don’t open your mouth, the contract will make the proper judgement. If you are careful with your words and actions, you won’t be in breach of contract.”

“Then I needed something that would count as profit for me. I want you to sell 10% of the items you gain in Dungeons exclusively to me.”

“Of course, Maetel and any of my other party members have to agree to sell it to you. It has to be a unanimous decision. Also, I won’t sell any items that I choose not to sell to you to other merchants. If you don’t have the purchasing power, you have to find a suitable owner to sell the items to.”

“Since this is an exclusive contract, could you give me a grace period to come up with the funds? Moreover, the 3rd Clause must.....”

Artpe and Mycenae pitted their heads against each other with the contract between them. They were precise in their calculations, and they double checked each clause. The townspeople were busy constructing the city, but when they caught sight of the young magician, they thought he was quite talented in picking up women.

“.....also, I have an additional addendum.”

In a flash, Mycenae raised her head from the contract to look at Artpe. When he met her eyes, her eyes were very serious. They were clear and deep. He was a bit surprised by them. He wondered if the conversation up until now had been a set up for this moment.

“What is it?”

“The place is a bit far from the Diaz kingdom, but..... Does customer know about the Forest of Eternity?”

“It is located on the border of Duchy of Tiata. It is the place of origin for the Elves. Isn’t it centered around the World Tree?”

“.....as expected, you know about it. I heard you guys were in a country town before both of you were chosen as heroes. So how are you so knowledgeable?”

Mycenae let out a sigh at Artpe’s words. He let out a bitter laugh when he caught a hint of irritation in her sigh.

The information regarding the Forest of Eternity weren’t widespread amongst humans. The residents of the forest were zealous in protecting their location. They had cut off all communications with the outside world. It was as Artpe had said. The residents were none other than Elves.

“Then do you perhaps know what the Forest of Eternity is facing

right now?”

“I can make a guess. The friction between the Duchy and the forest might have worsened. A country that covets the Elves might have sent out an organized group. The monsters might be causing more mayhem. The World Tree might be drying up. Maybe, all of these events are the reason why the Forest of Eternity is being ruined.”

“You are absolutely correct. It is all of the above. The Forest of Eternity is in overall distress. If things continue to head in this direction, it’ll be in ruins soon. It will all be thanks to those that thinks with their lower body instead of their brains!”

Elves were beautiful. It was said that they were born from the vital force of the World Tree, and they were beautiful enough to be called fairies. It was just amongst humans. They wer considered to be one of the most beautiful races amongst races that were capable of rational thought. Of course, many people desired them.

“Amongst the smut that is circulated within the kingdom, 80% of them deals with Elves.”

“Men are the worst……!”

If people were just reading books about Elves, it could be considered to be charming. However, in the past, countless number of people trespassed into the Forest of Eternity to kidnap Elves. The Elves had to fight against them over the long years. This was why Elves spat on the ground when other races were brought up.

“The manhood of Orcs and human men should be severed.”

Mycenae grinded her teeth as she spoke. She expressed her anger as her ears fluttered fiercely. Artpe couldn’t help but chuckle. She was speaking very serious words, so he didn’t get why she looked so cute right now.

Artpe wasn’t into older women, yet she had just delivered an

effective blow on Artpe. Sadly, Mycenae was too incensed to realize this fact. He lightly slapped his cheek with one hand. He took in deep breaths as he opened his mouth.

“It can't be helped. However, you guys always managed to hang in there.”

“.....that's true. We've managed to hold out until now.”

Mycenae nodded her head. Since Artpe wasn't going to hide the fact that he was a hero, she didn't plan on hiding the fact that she was an Elf. To be more specific, she was a Dark Elf.

In truth, she possessed a powerful presence. Even Silpennon was able to pick up on this fact. Artpe possessed Observation magic that was ranked higher than what she possessed. There was no way he hadn't picked up on her true identity.

“However, it has gotten worse recently. It really seems like something is happening within the forest. Unfortunately, I was reduced into becoming a Dark Elf, so it'll be difficult to give direct help to the forest.....”

“The World Tree is really petty. Whenever one of you makes a little mistake, it reduces them into Dark Elves.”

“I...it isn't the World Tree's fault. It was because I was inexperienced! Anyways, that isn't important. It is the Forest of Eternity.”

Artpe narrowed his eyes when she finally broached the main subject.

Mycenae looked straight into his eyes as she made a sincere request.

“At some time in the future, could you accept my Quest which is related to the Forest of Eternity?”

“All right. You should also put that into the contract.”

“What.....?”

Artpe had agreed to it so easily that Mycenae was taken aback.

“Is it ok for you to accept it so easily? I’m not sure I should be saying this, but the situation within the Forest of Eternity is very dire. It might get very dangerous for you!”

“I’ll be dragged to that place anyways if I continue to act like a hero. I have no reason to turn down an extra reward when I know I’ll have to do this later.”

In Artpe’s past life, the Elves living inside the Forest of Eternity had suffered a really horrible ending. Moreover, if he went by what was happening within the Diaz Kingdom, the current situation would probably be worse than what occurred in Artpe’s past life.

‘I have to do something before it is too late. Tsk. I’m already doing something annoying right now, yet I have a future appointment to do another annoying task. This is why I didn’t want to become a hero.....’

However, he would work diligently from now on. He would do it for the peaceful farm life he would greet in the future.

“Your counterpart isn’t here, so I’m not sure you should agree for her....”

“Ha. If you were going to say that then you should have something before you took out the contract. Maetel is leaving everything regarding the contract up to me. ”

At that moment, Maetel was with Sienna. They were exploring a Dungeon they had found on this mountain. Maetel was teaching the ABC of battle to Sienna, and they were gathering any items that was worth money.

Normally, Dungeons were very hard to find, yet it wasn’t a problem for Artpe.

“So this finalizes the contract?”

“Yes? Yes…….”

She had been trembling inside, because she thought Artpe was going to ask for something very big. She nodded her head.

“Hoo-ooh.”

“Ooh. Oooh. I hate this feeling.”

When the draft was completed, they put their signatures on it. The Soul Contract split into two, and two pages were absorbed into the body of Artpe and Mycenae.

It was an incredible magic contract. When there was a breach of contract, the penalty would be inflicted on one's soul. It was very expensive, but it allowed each party to completely trust each other.

This was why it was possible for Artpe to ask her questions that he had wanted to ask.

“Do you have a Skill Book that can be used by a Warrior Priestess?”

“That child was given the occupation of Warrior Priestess!?”

“So do you have it or not?”

“I don't have it right now. Do you realize how rare a Warrior Priestess Class is? Moreover, most of the Skill Books related to that Class is under the care of the temples..... Ooh-ah. You are giving me a very difficult homework from the beginning!”

“Please, I beg of you.”

Artpe had on an impudent smile. It was an expression that would never be on a face of someone making a request. When he stood up, Mycenae grumbled at the fact that he left the matter as is..... She smacked her lips when she felt the energy that was being released from the bottom of the mountain.

“As expected, you weren't just doing a simple construction job.”

Artpe had a twisted smile on his face. He didn't have to answer

her. The smile was answer enough.

“I’ll see you next time, ajumma. Please take care of Silpennon and Leseti.”

“I’m almost done with that task. If you want to purchased the Warrior Priestess Skill Book, you’ll have to call me a bit sooner next time!”

Mycenae took something out from her pocket. She threw it towards Artpe before she disappeared. Artpe confirmed the identity of the item as he snatched it out of the air.

“.....it’s a communication instrument.”

It probably was a communication device that connected only with Mycenae, and it might double as a summoning device.

It seemed such services came along with making an exclusive contract. Artpe snorted as he put it away. Then he took a step forward as he weighed the enemy force that was busily climbing up the mountain.

“Magician-nim?”

“Yes, it is nothing. You should continue to build.”

The townspeople, who had been busy in their tasks, tilted their heads in puzzlement at Artpe’s movements. Artpe shook his head as he waved them away. If they got involved in this, it would get more complicated. From now on, the situation would be in Artpe’s domain.

‘So, I just have to exclude the region containing the Dungeon where Maetel and Sienna is traveling towards.....’

The Read All Creation ability worked fiercely as all the information about this region was injected into his brain. He knew where Maetel and Sienna was heading. He had the information regarding the size of the enemy force, and the terrain they were climbing. He even had the information regarding the structural

integrity of the region supporting the small city they were building, and the mess that was left behind when Artpe gathered the ingredients for the construction.....

He finished his calculations.

“All right. Let’s do this.”

Artpe extended both his hands as he extended dozens of Mana Strings. All of them burrowed into the ground to cause a weak earthquake.

He had uprooted all the trees, so the soil was loosely held now. The tremor hit this region.

“What the hell? I feel a vibration.”

“Vibration? What the hell.... Uh?”

“I...it’s the soil. There’s rocks mixed in with the dirt....”

“It’s a landslide! A landslide has just occurred!”

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhk!”

It was a enormous landslide that was almost impossible to replicate even with high rank magic. It engulfed the soldiers and the black magicians!

Chapter 43 - Hero VS Kingdom (5)

Artpe hadn't chosen the site of the construction on a whim. There was a large open space on the mountainside. It was the ideal place to build a city. Many people would be able to live there. Moreover, this place was highly visible. If soldiers and black magicians were tracking them, it would be quite easy for them to find this place.

‘This is my last chance to nip this in the bud before this blows up into something big. If their ability to judge a situation is not compromised, they would send their biggest force towards us in haste when they realize what I’m trying to do here. They’ll try to completely bury this in the darkness.’

This was why Artpe had baited them. Instead of allowing them to increase the casualties of the innocents, Artpe decided to give them a target they can focus on. As if to confirm his thought process, the soldiers immediately gathered towards the mountain.

That wasn't all. There was a geographical advantage that inevitably came with being located midway up the mountain. Anyone that discovered and climbed towards the city would all be considered to be enemies.

Lastly, while he was destroying the mountain to construct the city, Artpe had executed the final touch to his plan. It was inevitable for him to upturn the earth when he uprooted the trees. In the process of doing so, how difficult would it be for him to prepare a trap within the terrain?

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!”

“T...the ground is eroding! The soil...!”

For example, Artpe had buried crystal balls that had been about to explode from being stuffed with Mana. He buried them deep in the ground, and he detonated them to cause massive casualties to

his enemies.

“W...water!? My god! The valley! The water is coming from the valley!”

“Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!”

For example, he might have done some funny business while he constructed the waterways. His enemies would be swept away by the sewage.

“Boulders…… There are large boulders”

“Oh, no.... Oh my god.”

“Koo-poo-aht!”

For example, he had stacked up a pile of boulders that he had excavated from the construction work. He sent them rolling as he caused the landslide.

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhk!”

“R...run away.... Kah-ahk!”

Several thousand soldiers immediately died before they could enter into a battle. They hadn't even been able to locate their enemies before they were hit with a natural disaster. The road to mountain wasn't steep. However, a considerable number of soldiers and black magicians had already suffered horrible deaths.

“Devil.”

“There's a devil here!”

“A devil lives in this mountain! Run away!”

Who would actually want to climb up this mountain? The morale of the soldiers immediately bottomed out. The black magicians were too afraid of the unknown beings that resided on top of the mountain, so their feet were stuck to the ground.

“If they are able to use such tactics, what level are these magicians! How many of them are there!”

“Ooh ooh. This is terrifying. What spell was that? I...I can't win against that.”

Artpe's purple eyes let out a steady light as he moved his fingers through the air. The Mana Strings followed the movements of his fingers as additional landslides occurred.

The structure of all creation was seen through his eyes, so it was possible to know what would happen if certain parts were severed.

“Kooo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!”

“H...help me.....”

“Oh Demon King!”

The death throes of numerous people rang out. Death upon death was piling on as their blood became a lake, and their corpses became a hill. As if to add insult to injury, casualties continued to mount.

However, they had nowhere else to go. If they were able to act freely, they would have left at the outset.

“Huhk!”

“L...look at what's happening down there. What's going on.....”

“I...it's an earthquake.”

Of course, the townspeople became aware of the fact that something was happening nearby. It was almost miraculous, but their current location was left alone. Still, the rest of the mountain was collapsing, so they couldn't help but notice it.

“The soldiers below.....”

“The magician-nim is wiping them out.”

“He isn't making any large gestures. He is just waving his hands!”

He was using Mana Strings in conjunction with his Read All Creation ability. He looked like a god to the people around him. In truth, this was all possible, because he had made countless

preparations beforehand. The people around him didn't know this fact. Basically, his abilities were great for bluffing!

‘The difference between a Four Heavenly King and a hero is paper thin.’

Artpe was pleased as he waved his hands. An additional 100 soldiers died from one wave, and another 80 died at his next gesture. Endless pain, screams and despair filled the bottom of mountain. However, Artpe didn't pay the slightest attention to them.

He already knew this would happen from the beginning. This was why he had sent Maetel to a different location. Maetel was now adept at discerning between good and evil. However, she couldn't put aside her tendency to shoulder every death onto her shoulders.

‘However, I'm able to shrug it off.’

At the very least, the part of him that was the Four Heavenly King of the Demon King's army was better suited for this task than a hero. He was able to kill strangers to accomplish his goals. It was something one couldn't do unless one was able easily forget about such deeds.

He had lived under the unreasonable orders from the Demon King. He had lived through an unreasonable world. When the numbers of beings he had killed exceeded a million, it was possible for him to forget about their deaths. Therefore, there was no way Artpe would feel much when he was killing those that deserved death!

“Is it about done now?”

He had waved his hands for an hour. When Artpe confirmed that no troops were entering into the mountain, he retracted his hands. At this point, the mountain looked completely different from before.

“Well, if we can get up and down from this place, it should be fine.”

“I wonder if we can be prosperous living on this mountain.....”

This place that had been normal mountain A to the villagers. However, this mountain would now be long remembered in history. They had a faraway look as they looked at their residential environment, but they couldn't make their complaints known to Artpe.

Of course, Artpe knew what they were feeling inside.

“You should focus on the construction instead of paying attention to me. Do you really think it'll end with just one attack?”

“Heek!”

“A...a force of that size is going to come again?!?”

“It might be a larger force. It'll be good for you guys if I can take care of them while I'm still here.”

A chill went up their spines when they heard his words. The people meekly went back to work. Artpe snorted as he exited the construction site.

‘So then, let's.....’

He had purposefully spared one person. Amongst the black magicians, there had been one that possessed decent power, yet he had been very passive. He kept looking around at his surrounding in a cautious manner. Artpe buried everyone except him. He let this particular magician run away.

The bastard probably thought he was lucky. He probably thought that he had survived, because he had more sense than the others. To be precise, Artpe had enticed the black magician to act this way. Artpe had made the black magician think that he was clever in his escape.

However, the black magician never escaped Artpe's sight from

the beginning to the end.

‘Reinforcement.’

While Artpe was walking quickly, he used the Reinforcement skill on his boots.

It immediately allowed him to activate the Blink magic. The ability of the boots had been amplified, so he would be able to use Blink once or twice a day without consuming any of his Mana. It also considerably extended the range of the Blink magic.

If he could advance in his Reinforcement skill, he could probably use an additional Blink. However, his current capabilities was enough.

“Hmmp!”

Artpe used consecutive Blinks as he kicked off the ground. In a flash, he was already running across the base of the mountain. In his previous life, it would have been impossible for him to move like this.

He never imagined there would come a day when he would be able to physically exert himself like this. The title of a Hero wasn’t an empty one. As he had leveled up in the past year, he hadn’t just grown in terms of magical energy. His physical stats had also made rapid progress.

Of course, his physical abilities were laughable when compared to a level 160 Warrior, but he was on a different level when compared to a mage of similar level. Artpe looked exactly like a typical magician on the outside. This was why they wouldn’t know about Artpe’s physical capabilities. This gave him an advantage against his opponents.

“Another Blink and.... Good. I caught you.”

“Kuhk!?”

He had quickly descended the mountain, and he was finally

successful in grabbing the black magician by the back of his neck. As expected of a cautious and meticulous person, the black magician was equipped with an Artifact that attacked an ambusher. However, it was effective only if the enemy was unaware of the trap.

Of course, Artpe knew the activation condition of the Artifact. He also knew its shape, structure and power. When he grabbed the black magician, he immediately destroyed it with his Mana String. The Artifact didn't activate.

“Huhk!”

The black magician was shocked when he realized this fact. He had already realized that his opponent was on a different level than him. It was enough for him.

“P...please spare me! I'll tell you everything!”

“All right. I was hoping you would say that.”

“Kuhk!”

Artpe moved as if he was about to charge forward, but he used the motion to plant his opponent's head into the ground. If he found out Artpe was a child, he might show some bravado. He had to pressure his opponent from the perch of absolute power. It would allow him to easily extract information out of the man.

Artpe put his foot on the man's back as he asked the question.

“So, which Demon is cooperating with the Archduke?”

There was a limit on how abrupt a topic should be broached. Artpe had already concluded that the Archduke was behind all of this, and he was cooperating with a Demon. He skipped over those parts to ask the next question!

It seemed the black magician was taken aback by Artpe's question, so he carefully opened his mouth.

“Demon? I don't know.... Heek.”

Artpe extended his Mana String, and he leisurely placed it around his opponent's finger. It felt as if the Mana String was sharp enough to sever his finger at any moment. The man gulped.

Artpe spoke in a low voice.

“Your life is worth nothing to me, but I’m guessing that isn’t true for you?”

“C...correct.”

“That means your words must change next time you speak. Understood?”

“Y...yes, sir.”

Threat and torture were essential skills for a Four Heavenly King in finding out a secret! Usually, heroes were unable to extract information. They were either too soft-hearted or inexperienced. It usually came back to bite them in the back, but that would never happen to Artpe!

“I...it was a woman called Tienna. She conscripted some of the kingdom's magicians. She said she would help the Archduke if he cooperated with her experiment..... I...I was one of the magician that was conscripted.”

He was telling the truth. He hadn't originally been a black magician. He had went through a Class change to become one. Of course, he had come here following the orders of the Archduke, so his origin was unimportant.

However, he had said her name was Tienna. If she had exited the Demon world to work within the human world, she would have to be talented. Artpe had never heard of her name in his past life. It probably was an alias.....

Artpe let out a sigh as he asked the question.

“I thought the Archduke was searching everywhere for the heroes. So how did he come up with an idiotic idea of cooperating

with a Demon?”

“W...we were told that the Demon King won't kill the heroes until the heroes attack the Demon King's castle.....”

Kyahn.

Artpe never expected them to leak such important information at such an early stage!

It would be a lie to say he wasn't feeling a bit nervous at facing a plan that was much more sophisticated than what the Demon King's army carried out in his previous life.

It seemed the Demon King's disposition as a chef hadn't gone away!

‘Still, the Archduke believed the information, and he gave consent to let the Demon into his country. Then there is the Demon King that refuse to catch the heroes when a really good opportunity presents itself. He continues to follow his recipe.....’

He wondered if it would cleaner to just let the world end. Originally, Artpe had no desire to protect the world. He had done his best to work towards his peaceful retirement, yet problems were coming at him from unexpected places. It sapped his energy away.

“I...I'm telling the truth! It sounds unbelievable, but that's the story I was told! I completely understand your reaction. I didn't believe it the first time I heard it, but....”

“All right. I believe you.”

“Then you are going to spare me!”

“Before I do so, let me ask you the last question. What's the size of the army waiting on standby? Speak.”

The shortcut to victory was to take the enemies unawares before they could conduct an attack. A smile of triumph appeared on Artpe's lips. It was best to upturn the table before the game could

be set!

The black magician gave an answer

“There is none…….”

“……huh?”

At Artpe’s questioning voice, the man gave additional information with a defeated voiced.

“That was all of us…… It is impossible for the kingdom to spare any more soldiers. You’ve killed over 10,000 soldiers and over 20 black magicians. How can there be more? The Diaz Kingdom is ruined now. When the Archduke finds out about this, I’m sure he will cry…….”

“…….”

Artpe became silent as he heard the black magican’s words. His ardent lamentation reeked of helplessness .

It was the moment when a hero ruined a country.

Chapter 44 - Two Hero's Party

“Well, you can get up now.”

“Yes……. A child!? Kahk!”

“You aren’t going to amount to anything much.”

After he extracted the time-sensitive information, Artpe spared the black magician as promised. The black magician's two arms were tied together, and a warm marble was placed near his chest. It would immediately explode if the black magician tried to use magic. Then Artpe took his gold and artifacts. No matter how he did it, he had spared the black magician’s life.

“You are so young, yet how can you be so brutal…….”

“I’m sure you know about the experiments that was carried out by the Demon with the help of the Archduke. Can you say that again? Who’s brutal?”

Did the black magician relax a little bit when he found out Artpe was young? He had the guts to bad mouth Artpe, but when he heard Artpe’s voice, he immediately shut his mouth. He knew his life could be easily taken away if he spoke carelessly.

On the other hand, the battle had ended so suddenly that Artpe had a hard time accepting the truth. He was barely able to realize that everything wasn’t settled yet.

“Do you have other locations where you conduct experiments?”

“W...we don’t. There are still black magicians left in the kingdom, but there are only one or two left....”

Nothing could be done with just two black magicians. If they were capable of doing something, they were out of Artpe’s league as of now, so he just had to ignore them.

Did he really solve everything at once?

Artpe was having a hard time believing in his own

accomplishment, so he lowered his voice further to give additional threats. However, the only thing he accomplished by doing so was to bring about the black magician's teary eyed confession. It brought back childhood nightmares for the man.

At this point, he knew it was true. Diaz really had no answer!

“Maybe, if all the forces of Diaz could be gathered to attack this place, it might be possible. However, the whole country isn't on the side of the Archduke. It isn't as if he could unilaterally gather all the magicians within the kingdom. There is also the issue of him receiving help from a Demon to take control of the throne.... The only ones that could be sent to this place were troops that were completely under the command of the Archduke. Since all of us are dead.....”

Artpe didn't need to hear any more to know what would happen. In short order, the ownership of the Diaz Kingdom would definitely change again. Or maybe the kingdom itself would disappear.

Artpe had a far away look as he looked past the mountain. His gaze came to rest on the mountain of corpses and blood that was flowing like an ocean. It was a nice and peaceful view that went well with what Artpe was feeling.

“All right. What about the demon?”

“The demon trained us, and she left after giving giving us orders. I...I'm telling you the truth. If her presence became known to the opposing factions, the Archduke's position would have been untenable.... This is the condition the Archduke had to work with.”

Was that really true? What if the Archduke stationed his troops nearby in case something went wrong? Wouldn't he use the Demon to turn the kingdom on its head when something went wrong?

Artpe had a habit of always imagining the worst case possible. Then he thought about what he would do in such a situation. He went through that process, and he realized there was nothing that could be accomplished by him going to the palace. This fact calmed his heart.

“Yes, if they are at a dead end, maybe it might be better for the Diaz Kingdom to fall.”

“T....then I can.....”

The black magician slightly narrowed his eyes to look at Artpe’s expression. Artpe had let go of everything, and his heart was feeling lighter. It seemed the black magician was trying to use that moment to his advantage. He was trying to secure his own safety. Artpe put on a bright smile as he spoke to the black magician.

“Of course. I gave you my promise, so I’ll spare you. However, you do realize I’m not going to spare you for nothing?”

“S...sure. I’ll do whatever you want. I’ll give up on black magic to live a peaceful life! Maybe, I’ll go to the countryside to tend some cows?”

“Are you looking down on the dairy industry?”

“Heek!?”

Artpe put him in his place before he used the Read All Creation to read the black magician’s information.

[Deyus von Signema]

[Black Magician]

[Level : 70]

[Strength : 8 Agility : 9 Stamina : 16 Magic Energy : 169]

Artpe’s magical energy was over 800. Even if one took into account the almost 100 level difference, the gap was ridiculously large. Moreover, while Artpe possessed magical energy over 800, he also had a considerable amount of strength, agility and stamina.

Artpe was several dimensions apart from the black magician, and the difference was unsurmountable.

However, despite this fact, Deyus' talent wasn't too bad. It seemed he had been diligent in his magic studies every time he had leveled up. Basically, he had done tasks that would raise his magical energy. Normally, the simple and honest ones that work really hard didn't get lured by black magic.....

Artpe was tilting his head in puzzlement when he caught the florid last name.

He realized the truth through intuition.

“Your parents are nobles from the Archduke's faction?”

“How did you know that!? My father is the right hand man of the Archduke, so I had no choice..... Huhk!”

Deyus von Signema was so surprised by Artpe's pointed question that he unintentionally blurted out the information. He flinched when Artpe's smile turned vicious.

“Ah, it doesn't matter. You can't gain much from using me against my family. I'm ready to sever my relationship from the family. I'm willing to go live a quiet life in the remote countryside.....”

“No, I was just thinking you have the setting to become a legendary hero.”

“L...legendary? Setting?”

“Yes. I will spare you, and I'm starting to have an idea on how you can be of benefit to me.”

Deyus von Sigmema had a bad feeling when he heard Artpe's words. The next word out of Artpe's mouth pretty much confirmed Deyus' thoughts.

“Have you heard of a Soul Contract?”

“Are you ok, Artpe!?”

“Oppa!”

When Artpe returned to the site of the construction, Maetel and Sienna were already back after finishing their Dungeon exploration. They had already surveyed what had occurred below the mountain, so they had a good idea on what Artpe had done.

“I’m not hurt at all, so you guys don’t have to grope me like that.”

“But there are so many corpses here?”

“It was like cutting a bread with a knife. There is no way I would cut my finger doing such a task, so you guys should relax.”

Maetel’s talent made her a genius, but she couldn’t kill ten thousand troops. This was true even if she used her Acceleration skill, which was a total cheat ability. What he had done was possible, because he was a magician.

“Still, I’m glad Artpe is unharmed.”

“Oppa~.”

When the two girls were sure Artpe was unharmed, they clung to his side. Deyus was staring at this curious sight, but he quickly lowered his gaze to the ground.

Thankfully, Deyus was quick on the uptake. As Artpe had that thought, he spoke quietly towards Maetel and Sienna.

“I think we should leave tomorrow, so you guys should make preparations.”

“Tomorrow!? Isn’t that too fast?”

“Didn’t you originally say it would take over a week, oppa?”

That’s right. He had originally allocated around a week for all of this. He had assumed there would be at least two more attacks by troops under the command of the Archduke.

“My secondary power was stronger than I thought.....”

It seemed the Archduke of Diaz was dumber than he had assumed.

“I’m not sure what you are talking about, but does this mean the people here are safe now?”

“For now, they are.”

Of course, even if the townspeople gladly left behind their former residences to come to this place, it didn’t mean there won’t be any calamities or threats in the future. Even if the Archduke was ruined, it wasn’t as if his power base would all disappear. Moreover, the Demon King’s army was alive and well. This was why this location was the ideal location to place this city.

‘We will stay here tonight. However, we’ll have to move on when the day brightens. We’ll have to move as if we are really busy.....’

Artpe let out a light sigh as he spoke to his party.

“You two did well in going to the Dungeon. It’ll be busy once again tomorrow. Both of you should wash and rest. Sienna, you have to do a good job saying farewell to your sister.”

“Yes!”

Sienna hugged Artpe tighter before she disengaged. She turned around as she ran off. Level 28 could be seen clearly above her head. Laughter slipped out of him at the absurdity of it.

“How come there are only monsters around me?”

“But Artpe is the most incredible one amongst us.”

Maetel spoke as she glared at the retreating back of Sienna. Artpe gave a non-committal answer as he mussed her hair a bit roughly.

“You should go rest.”

“But Artpe is going to work again.”

“Since I’ve made this mess, I can’t just leave everything as is.”

Maetel had a sullen expression on her face, but she knew there

was nothing she could do. She nodded head.

Maetel glanced at the black magician Deyus, and she asked Artpe a question.

“This person is a bad guy. Is it ok for you to be with him like this?”

“I gave him my word that I would spare him, so I have no choice. Instead, I’m thinking about using him in the future.”

“Ooh, ooh-ooh.”

It didn’t matter what Artpe was saying at that moment. Deyus’ mind was filled with the word Soul Contract. He couldn’t hear anything else. What scary things will he have to do with his soul on mortgage!

Maetel really didn’t like Deyus, who was letting out a foul energy. However, she saw that he was shaking in fear, so it seemed he couldn’t do anything against Artpe.

As expected, Deyus didn’t have any allies here. He was destined to shake in fear until he was given an order.

The night passed quickly . Artpe stood at the center of the construction site, and he did all the tasks that could be done with his Mana Strings.

He had made a mess of the mountain, so he tidied it up. He gathered materials that would be used for construction, then he searched the mountain for animals that could be used for food.....

As he used it more, Artpe realized that Mana String was an incredible magic. This was especially true when he used it with his Read All Creation ability. The Mana Strings could gather and analyze all the information in its surrounding. It used the information to move in the most efficient manner. It sometimes felt as if he was moving in all directions at the same time.

Even the one using the magic was surprised, so how would those

watching him feel? Other people couldn't see the Mana Strings. It was as if Artpe was changing everything just by waving his hands. He looked like a god.

"I really don't think he is human."

"Do you doubt it after seeing all of this? He is a god. A god!"

Thanks to Artpe's exertion, the city had a foundation by the time morning came. The people felt the truth in their bones. They realized how much construction could be done by working with a magician, who possessed a basic knowledge of architecture.

"It is possible to create waterways like this? How surprising."

"This place is already better than our town!"

"I love our view. It is quite open."

"This should be good enough."

Artpe even checked the wooden barricade around the small city. He made sure everything was perfect before he withdrew his magic. He had used Mana Strings every time his Mana had recovered. Usually, it took a long time for Unique Spells to develop, but it had already reached level 10.

".....shall we go now?"

He cleared everything. It was impossible to clear a Quest as thoroughly as this. He had finished the base Quest alongside the hidden Quests. He hadn't intended to do this, but he kept completing the Quests that had popped up in a row. It was ironic, but he was done now.

"Magician-nim, are you perhaps leaving already?"

"Magician-nim....."

It was almost supernatural as to how the townspeople were able to sense his impending departure. They were flustered as they hung onto him. However, Artpe was firm in his attitude.

“I did all I could do here. No one will be able to threaten you if you stay within this city. There’s no one left to put a curse on you, so you can be at ease and resume your lives. Ah. I want you to forget about my party, and don’t ever speak about us. You should always bear that in mind.”

Artpe had rescued the kids, and he had gathered the townspeople to construct a city on the mountain. They owed him a lot, yet he wanted them to forget about him. They were surprised by his demand.

“Magician-nim…….”

“I’m going.”

It seemed the townspeople wanted Artpe to live in the city. They wanted him to rule over them, but Artpe didn’t hold any lingering attachment to this mountain.

He had been forced to carry out this Quest, and he hadn’t received any rewards. He hated those types of Quests the most! Artpe wanted to run out of here as soon as possible. He dragged Maetel and Sienna with him. The people came out in droves, yet he ignored them all.

“Sienna, you have to be happy!”

“I’ll be back, unni!”

The most memorable sight was Aena and Sienna. Aena was crying, yet Sienna had a big smile on her face.

It seemed she didn’t want her unni to worry about her or maybe she really wasn’t sad…… He wanted to think it was the former, but Sienna’s face was way too bright for it to be true.

“Aena unni will be safe if she lives in this town. It is enjoyable for me to be with oppa. This is what is best for the both of us!”

“It isn’t enjoyable for me if Sienna is with us.”

“Maetel unni, you joke around too much.”

The two brats armed themselves with congenial smiles as they sparred with each other. Artpe decided not to intrude. In fact, he didn't even like acknowledging it. Deyus was being dragged by the rope, and it felt as if he was staring at Artpe. He also decided to ignore him.

“Magician-nim!”

“Magiciaaaaaaaaaaaaaan-nim!”

He had completely turned away from the city, and the gazes of the townspeople was squarely on his back. It stung. What did he actually do that merited them calling after him with such fervor? He was afraid his resolve would weaken if he turned around to look at them.

‘Humans are simple beings. I did all of this knowing this would happen. What emotion am I supposed to feel when the people react in a the manner I predicted?’

It was a thought that was unbecoming of him. Artpe tsked as he shook his head to free himself from those thoughts. He took out the communication device, and he soon had a connection to Mycenae.

“Ajumma.”

[Hello, customer. My name is Mycenae. Mycenae.]

“Did you finish their education?”

[.....it just finished right now]

“All right. I'm going to visit them once, so you should wait for me with them.”

[Did you really contact me for that...]

Artpe ruthlessly severed the connection, then he turned to look at his party.

“Silpennon's party will be in charge of this black magician. Of course, I will put a fail safe in place..... After we tell them what to

do, we can go on a merry trip to find a magician. Does anyone have a question?”

“Yes, I have one!”

Maetel raised her hand high into the air as she spoke.

“The level difference between Sienna and us is large. Since we are leaving behind the black magician in their care, what if leave behind Sienna too?”

It was a weirdly compelling suggestion, but Artpe let out a bitter laugh. It was possible for Maetel to become smart when she was trying to eliminate her competitor! On the other hand, Sienna was flustered as she gripped Artpe’s sleeve.

“I like oppa. I can raise my level quickly, so don’t throw me away. Ok?”

Of course, Artpe didn’t plan on leaving behind Sienna. Unlike Silpennion, she was a cute and honest girl. It was a plus, but there was a fundamental reason why she was different from him.

“Silpennion is different from Sienna, Maetel. If I want to explain this difference, I’ll have to give you a long lecture on what Classes are..... I’ll give you a short explanation for now. Maetel, do you know about those that are called nobles when they aren’t nobles?”

Maetel shook her head from side to side without much strength. Artpe nodded his head in a solemn manner as he gently put one hand on Sienna’s head. Then he spoke to Maetel.

“We have one right here. You should greet her. She is the noble healer of our party.”

Chapter 45 - Two Hero's Party (2)

Priests were always stiff-necked. They were all stuck-up. However, there were good reasons why they were able to act that way. The first reason being priests were as rare as magicians. The second reason being they were considered to be talents indispensable in all situations.

“It isn’t as if there aren’t any magic spells that could heal wounds. However, the effectiveness of a magician’s Heal is crap. It sucks. Even if the magician had enough Mana to use Heal, one would be better off using scouting, defensive or offensive magic. On top of that, the probability of getting wounded increases as the Dungeons become more dangerous. It is impossible to last just using potions. This is why all parties want and seek the help of a priest.”

Of course, it was a bit of a different story in regards to heroes. They could learn skills from all Classes. It wasn't just the magician’s Healing spell. They could even learn the priest’s Cure spell.

However, Artpe already consumed an extreme amount of Mana using the Mana Strings. He didn’t have the luxury to learn and use the Cure spell. Maetel was an idiot, so she couldn’t learn the spell.

However, a priestess with no attachment to any temple had shown up in front of him. He had Sienna, who was naturally gifted with high magical energy.

Even if she was a Warrior Priestess, she wasn’t completely dependent on her holy power. Her magical energy was structured in a way where she could stand on her own. Still, she was a priestess, so she would be able to learn the Cure spell!

“Oppa, my level is low. Will I be helpful to you?”

Sienna felt considerably relieved at Artpe’s words. She looked up

at him as she asked him the question. Maetel was explicit in expressing her disappointment. However, Artpe lightly ignored Maetel as he stroked Sienna's head.

“Of course, you will be of great help.”

“What a relief.”

Of course, this was under the assumption that she learned the Cure Spell that a Warrior Priestess could learn. He had no choice but to put his trust in Mycenae to make that part come true.

“It hasn't arrived yet.”

“?? I took a chance in signing an exclusive contract with you, yet ajumma is being very unhelpful.”

“You really are a rude customer! Moreover, you called me ajumma again!”

Mycenae grinded her teeth, but it was true that she hadn't been able to acquire Artpe's order. She didn't know why she was giving excuses. She let out a sigh as she gave Artpe the other item he had ordered. She pushed the Soul Contract towards him.

“Will this be all, customer? I'm going to go rest. This side venture has made me very tired.”

“You suffered a lot helping us. Take it easy. We'll see you again next time. ”

“Thank you, Elven merchant-nim.”

Silpennon and Leseti gave a courteous farewell. It seemed Mycenae wasn't totally devoid of feelings. She put on a soft expression as she raised her hand towards them.

“For this business trip, I'll consolidate the education fee, and the items expenditure cost. I'm givubg you a 30% discount, so it will be 1,287 gold.”

“Kyahh. I guess we can't move past that.”

“How can I move past that? Just be a good boy and give me my money.”

Silpennon helplessly paid out her business expenses. After Mycenae was sure she received her dues, she started to move away with her cart behind her. She gazed at Artpe.

“I’ll contact you as soon as I acquire the Skill Books. When that happens, please come to the closest branch of the Anywhere company.”

“If possible, please hurry it up.”

Sienna was undoubtedly a Warrior ‘Priestess’, yet there was no one here that could give her the education she needed as a priestess. This was why she was simply learning Mana Control and fighting techniques.

It wasn’t just Mana. She was pretty talented at controlling her body, so she was making progress on both fronts. However, as her combat skill level and Mana Control level kept climbing, he couldn’t shake the feeling that something was amiss.

“Ah. I want you to gather Skill Books and Spell Books for all the other Classes. I want you to acquire everything you can get your hands on. Do you get what I’m trying to say?”

“Of course. You can leave it to me. Also, you should prepare the money you will have to give me.”

“Hoo.”

Artpe smirked when she mentioned money. She suddenly had the desire to ask him more about it, but she came to the conclusion that he wouldn’t give her an answer. She clicked her tongue as she disappeared.

“Let’s go after we finish our business here.”

“So why did you come back here again? Huh. By the way....”

When Mycenae exited, there were only six people left inside the

Slime Dungeon. Sienna stuck close to Artpe's back as she warily looked at the other people. Silpennon's eyes turned round when he caught sight of Sienna.

"You gained another woman, Artpe. You are young, yet you are already like this. It is terrifying to imagine what you will be like in the future."

"When you start paying attention to the gender of one's party member, that is when you have a problem on your hand."

"Party member? You put her in when you didn't put us in?"

Silpennon looked aggrieved. As if Artpe understood Silpennon's feeling, he nodded his head.

"I know you are disappointed that my party gained a member. I know all about it. That is why I am here to supplement your party. I brought a talent here. You should say hi to Deyus."

"No, what we want is to join your party..... What did you just say?"

Instead of Sienna, Artpe pushed Deyus towards Silpennon's side. For some unknown reason, Deyus had his head covered with a hood. However, he couldn't resist against Artpe's strength, so his face was revealed.

At that moment, Leseti instinctively unsheathed her sword.

"You dare show yourself, insect."

"Deyus....."

"C...crown prince."

His face turned ashen as he faced Silpennon. Silpennon's face was cold as his expression hardened.

It seemed they were acquaintances. Moreover, it seemed they weren't on good terms.

"Artpe. I'm sure you brought him here as a party member for us,

because you don't know this man's identity. I cannot accept this man. His family once swore an oath of loyalty to the king, yet they betrayed us by taking the side of the Archduke. They killed numerous knights that tried to protect me.....”

“Silpennon, I already know who he is.”

“What!?”

Silpennon became incensed, but the smile on Artpe's lips remained. He put a hand on Deyus' shoulder as he spoke.

“You should explain it. Tell them what you did, and how you came to be with me.”

“W...will you stop them from killing me?”

“Of course. I have a use for you.”

“.....ughh.”

Deyus closed his eyes tight when he saw the Soul Contract in Artpe's hand. While he was being bombarded by murderous intent from Silpennon and Leseti, he let out a sigh before he opened his mouth.

“Your highness. In truth, I......”

The explanation was brief. He hadn't been on the scene of the revolt, and he hadn't become a black magician by choice. However, he had been part of the troops dispatched to destroy the evidence of their crime. It was most definitely a sin that was worthy of death. It was good that he was able to admit that fact, but.....

“How effective is a Soul Contract? How great must it be for you to spare him?”

“If he breaks it, his soul is up for forfeit.”

“Amazing.”

Deyus wasn't going to be a regular party member. This truth was quite clear to him. Silpennon stared at Artpe as he asked a

question.

“If it is alright with you, could you include a clause of my choosing in the contract for me?”

“Of course. However, you can’t kill him.”

“Of course, If I kill him, I can no longer torment him..”

“Heek.”

Deyus’ face turned paler, but there was no one here that would help him. In the end, he had to sign the Soul Contract, which was filled with unreasonable provisions. At that moment, the crown prince’s party gained a low rank slave.

“There is a limited amount of spells that can be used by a black magician. Still, unless you can find the help of a priest, he might become your best party member. His talent isn’t too bad, and he will be good at following directions.”

“I...I’ll do anything.....”

The content of the contract was bleak. Deyus had a look that could only be seen on those that had lost their country. The only comfort he could derive from this was the fact that he hadn’t been killed like his fellow black magicians.

“I know it is hard for you to emotionally accept him, but you and Leseti will be safer if you use him. This is why you shouldn’t kill him. You should take him along with you guys.”

“I understand. I’m surprised that you thought so much about us.”

Artpe had retraced his steps to bring Deyus here. It seemed he had been worried about them. Silpennon was moved by the gesture, but in a flash, a twinkle shone in Artpe’s eyes.

“In truth, that wasn’t the only reason I am here.”

“I should have known.”

Silpennon immediately became disappointed. However, he would soon be singing a different tune when he heard Artpe's next words. He spoke about the main reason for coming here. He spoke about why he added Deyus to their party.

"I came here to give you an offer that you cannot refuse."

"I've heard that from somewhere before....."

Silpennon narrowed his eyes. Artpe had spoken similar words when he rejected Silpennon's offer! He waited to see how great this offer was.

Artpe took out a map.

"Mmm..... A map?"

"It looks to be of high quality.... It's the map that was commissioned by the throne!?"

It was a map of the Diaz Kingdom. Artpe had acquired it when he killed the knights that were trying to assassinate Silpennon. The odd part about this map was the fact that there were circles drawn in various locations. Moreover, there were numbers written starting from 1 in random order.

"What is this.....? What are these circles? No, what do these numbers mean?"

Silpennon cross examined him. Artpe let out a light laugh as he gave an explanation.

"These are all Dungeons."

"What!?"

"What did you say!?"

"Pardon me!?"

Silpennon, Leseti and even Deyus was surprised. There were 20 or more circles drawn on the map. They couldn't believe these were all Dungeons!

However, Artpe's expression didn't falter at all as he spoke those words.

"I'm sure the Dungeons are here, so you can trust me on that. Of course, several of them have already been discovered. However, if you guys want to smoothly raise your levels, you should visit all of them."

When he heard those words, a thought suddenly lit up inside Silpennon's head. It was as if he was having a hard time believing his own thoughts. He carefully asked Artpe the question.

"Wait a moment, Artpe. The numbers start from one, because...."

"Yes. If you go in order, you won't have too much difficulty clearing the Dungeons. You will be able to grow as you clear them. This is especially true for you, Silpennon. You have to visit all of them to grow your Seeking skill and your Trap Dismantling skill."

"You....."

Astonishment was followed behind by shock. Silpennon's party decided not to think further on the subject. Artpe knew about Dungeons that were not discovered yet, and he also knew what level of monsters would appear within them!

"Within Deyus joining your party, you are only missing a priest. Aside from that fact, you have the perfect party. Since there are undiscovered Dungeons pointed out here, the reward will be quite lucrative. You can use the leftover money to purchase Mana potions and Stamina potions. Also, if you suffer defeat in a Dungeon, you can use the communication device to contact me."

"You....."

He knew Artpe's ability was boundless, but his knowledge was beyond bountiful! Was it really possible for a human to know all this?

"How can this be....."

“Hmm. It is possible because it’s Artpe.”

“Yes, it is because he is oppa.”

Leseti’s mouth hung open in amazement, and she just accepted the situation as is. However, Silpennon wasn’t dumb enough to believe that. Deyus, who was listening from the side, wasn’t dumb either. Maetel and Sienna wasn’t just talking about the veracity of knowledge. They believed nothing was impossible for Artpe to achieve in this world, so they naturally accepted his words.

“Hoo.... All right. Whatever.”

For a brief moment, Silpennon had puzzled over it. However, in the end, he decided not to challenge the veracity of Artpe’s claim. Artpe would gain nothing from lying to them. If he started doubting Artpe’s ability, he felt as if he would be going down a rabbit hole. It would be better for his sanity to just believe everything Artpe had said.

However....

“Since you’ve told us the reward, I’m guessing you will now offer your terms? Right, Artpe?”

“I like the fact that you are smart.”

Artpe grinned as he made his declaration.

“I want you guys to give me half of the Dungeon rewards.”

Chapter 46 - Two Hero's Party (3)

“Half? Are you sure that is enough?”

Artpe's stipulation made Silpennon feel dazed. Artpe was telling them everything about the Dungeons, and he even told them about the levels of the monsters they would face. Despite this fact, he only wanted half of the reward. It didn't matter what others said, but according to Silpennon's standards, it was a very generous offer. It was so generous that it was as if Artpe had given the information away for free. However, Artpe nodded his head as if it was reasonable.

“You have to think about you, Leseti and Deyus. The most crucial part is acquiring Deyus' skills, Spell Books, equipments and potions. If you think about the combined cost, I'm pretty sure not much will be left from your half of the reward. You should think of it as improving your chances of survival. Instead of saving your money, you are strengthening yourselves. That is why you'll have barely enough to pay for my half-share.”

“Artpe.....”

Silpennon and Leseti was floundering around in a soup of emotions. Deyus was confused. He wonder if this might be good for him in the long run.

They didn't' realize that he planned on using them in his future confrontation with the Demon King. It would allow him to avoid hardship in the future. It had been a while, since he had thought like a Four Heavenly King. Artpe continued to speak.

“Also, I'll give you a list right now. You will never sell these items from the Dungeons to the merchants. You have to keep it, and you have to give it to me at a later date. There is the Crown of Wisdom, Scroll of Destruction, Eye of Prophecy, Spring of Tears, Spear of Twilight.....”

Silpennon busily wrote down the names of the Artifacts given by Artpe. He tilted his head in puzzlement. He could tell that they were were terrifyingly high ranked Artifacts just by their names. He wondered if they would really come out from the Dungeons.

“Then there is the Blood Fragment... All right. That’s it.”

Artpe spoke the name of dozens of Artifacts without hesitation. Silpennon, who had written it down, had a very sour expression on his face.

“I’ve never heard of these items, yet I can tell they are incredibly valuable. Are you sure these items will come out from such low level Dungeons?”

“This is why I want you to diligently train your Seek skill. Then you’ll be able to find them. No, these items will come out from the Dungeons. You better not leave the Diaz kingdom until you find them all.”

Arte’s expression was alway composed. Of course, these Artifacts had all come out from the Dungeons in his previous life. These artifacts were worth so much that it was ill-matched to be within the low level Dungeons.

In the first place, Artpe had given them the locations of these Dungeons, because he wanted to acquire all those Artifacts. However, Artpe and Maetel’s levels were too high to go there themselves. Moreover, it was an annoying task since the Dungeons were located far apart from each other.

It was convenient to have others that would do the task for you!

“I want you put your trust in me, and do what I say.”

“I don’t particularly like your laid back attitude, but.... All right, I’ve digested everything you’ve said. You are saying we should work in parallel with each other.”

“Artpe…… If you weren’t here, I... Kyahhk!”

Letseti looked deeply moved as she grabbed Artpe's hands tightly. She was thrown aside by Maetel and Sienna. Silpennon wasn't amused with his former guardian knight's antic, so he glared at her. Then he carefully put away the valuable map.

"This has been a learning experience, Artpe. So this is how you suggest a proposal that can't be refused. I accept your proposal."

"All right. Let us go on our separate paths."

Artpe, Maetel and Sienna.

Silpennon, Leseti and Deyus.

No matter how one saw it, they were divided into the hero team and the support team.

They firmly shook hands.

It would take them two years to meet again.

"I'll be back after I become strong. Will you accept me into your party at that time?"

"All right. I'll think about when we reach that point."

"No, I don't like it. I don't like Silpennon."

"Why, Maetel!"

"I don't like you!"

It would be hard for them to meet up again, but Silpennon believed that they would be able to become friends someday.

The two party dispersed.

"Artpe, I'm curious about one thing."

After leaving the Dungeon, they were walking quickly down the mountainous path. While they were walking, Maetel asked Artpe a question.

"About what?"

"It's about the magician we are going to meet."

He had explained at ad nauseam about the magician's abilities, and the reason why they had to bring her into the party. Did she still feel repulsed by the prospect of growing the party? Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement as he turned to look at Maetel.

“What about the magician?”

Maetel's eyes narrowed as she asked the question.

“Is the magician a female?”

“Uh, yeah. The magician is female?”

He never expected her to ask about the gender of the magician. It was a question that had nothing to do with one's ability! Artpe was dumbfounded as he replied to the question. When she heard the answer, Maetel's expression turned more sullen.

“Artpe, did you send the black magician towards Silpennon, because he was male?”

“.....eh-whew.”

As expected, she was under a massive delusion. Artpe let out a sigh as he flicked Maetel's forehead.

“Gender isn't important. Silpennon's party didn't have a magician, and I had a magician under my thumb. The pieces fit together. That is why I sent him along with Silpennon. I didn't exclude him from our party, because he is male.”

“Eesh..... What if he had been a young and pretty girl?”

“I don't know what answer you want from me. I would have let the person join Silpennon's party irrespective of age and gender. Are you done now?”

“Oooh-mmmmm.”

It seemed Maetel wasn't satisfied with Artpe's answer. She let out discontented sound as she stuck close to him. It seemed she was trying to use skinship to express the feeling she wasn't able to articulate. When she did that, Sienna stuck to him on the other

side as if they were in competition.

Yes, he was now used to it. He hadn't wanted to get used to it, yet he had.

What should he call the bitter feeling he was feeling right now?

Artpe was absorbed in self-contemplation as he let out a sigh.

This time Sienna asked a question.

"Oppa, where can we find this magician-nim?"

"Ah..... The place is called Aedia. It is a country that is more advanced in magic research compared to the Diaz kingdom."

"She's in a different country!?"

Maetel suddenly expressed her shock. Artpe smirked when he saw this.

This small hero possessed incredible abilities, yet her knowledge, experience and intelligence was lacking compared to her capabilities. Still, he couldn't have her set her sight only on countryside villages. He also couldn't keep her tied down in the dark Dungeons.

It was time for her to broaden her horizon. He would be able accomplish that task by the time they meet the magician.

"We have to cross an ocean, so it'll be a pretty long journey. Of course, I've already planned out the route....."

Artpe took out another map. He had found more than one map of this kingdom on the knights he had killed.

"Well, look here. Do you see the city at the end of the map? This is a key location that links the Diaz kingdom to the other kingdoms. It is a harbor city named Frate. We'll travel across the ocean to reach Aedia."

The distance to Frate was around 300 times the distance they had traveled after Artpe and Maetel ran away from their town at the

age of 12.

To be fair, the incidents with the Hero's Dungeon and the Curse of the Demon had prevented them from traveling far. Still, Maetel had lived her whole life in the countryside. She would now be traveling an unfathomable amount of distance.

“Wahh-ahhh. It's far away. It might take us 3 months to walk there.”

“Of course, we aren't just going to go straight towards the city. We'll learn what we have to learn, and we'll kill the monsters we have to kill. We'll also buy what we need to buy. There is also the problem of the ocean being uncrossable during the fall and winter. This is why I intentionally plan to go there through a roundabout way.”

The ocean was uncrossable during fall and winter only for normal people, but the two girls didn't argue the point. Their attention was solely on the fact that they were going to hunt monsters. Their eyes shone fiercely.

They looked as if they were ready to slaughter the monsters at that very moment. It wasn't an expression that should be seen on a 12 and 13 year old girls..... However, when one thought about the path they would have to traverse in the future, they had the right attitude.

“We'll be on the road heading towards Frate. I intentionally didn't tell Silpennon about the Dungeons we are going to visit. We have to gather funds for our trip, and he has to increase Sienna's level.”

“You told them about so many Dungeons, yet there are still more Dungeons left? As expected, Artpe is.....”

“Yes. Yes. I'm amazing.”

There were a total of seven Dungeons on the way to Frate. Most of them were similar to the small Dungeons he had pointed out to

Silpennon. However, two were large Dungeons, and one needed 3 months to clear each of them.

Of course, it took 3 months for normal people without the Read All Creation ability.

“If we go through these Dungeons, Sienna should be at a level where she would be able to operate with us in Dungeons. Of course, this is all possible, because she has a special property that comes with being a Warrior Priestess.”

“Really?”

“Of course. She isn’t normal.”

Sienna’s talent was almost at a genius level.

Maetel was talented in all things except magic. Artpe was reborn as a hero possessing everything he had when he was one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Artpe’s talent had been reinforced. Sienna was less talented than Artpe, but if the two of them never existed, Sienna probably would have become the hero. This was how great her potential was.

“In other words, we just have to provide a smooth flow of ingredients, and Sienna’s growth speed will become ridiculously fast. ”

In the past, the Demon King had used Demons as ingredients to make the hero into a delicious dish.... He made her into a warrior. Now Artpe would use his Read All Creation ability alongside his memories of his past life. He would make Sienna into a fantastic member of the hero’s party. When he followed the Demon King’s orders, he had observed and learned what the Demon King had done. Even if he was half as successful, he could turn Sienna into a monster!

“I’ll follow everything oppa tells me to do! If you want me to do something, I will do anything for you. Anything.”

When he saw Sienna’s blind affection and actions, it was as if he

was looking at Maetel. This was why a sigh automatically slipped out of his mouth. When he finished having that thought, Maetel started growling at Sienna.

“Eeeeeee. I don’t like it.”

“I like unni, but I like oppa much more!”

“I don’t like you!”

In Sienna’s case, she had retained her life thanks to Artpe by being turned into a different race. On top of that, he was teaching her about Mana. It wasn’t as if he couldn’t see why she followed him in such an unconditional manner.

In fact, the more he thought about it Maetel’s attitude felt different from Sienna’s attitude.

What the hell happened with his past self to make Maetel like this!

“Both of you are members of this party, and you will have entrust each other’s life to one another in the future.”

“I know I have to hold it back for Artpe, but I can’t get rid of my dislike for her!”

“I’m willing to entrust my life to unni!”

“The fact that you like me makes me not like you more. If you act like that, I can’t hate you without feeling unsettled!”

Ah, maybe everything might turn out ok if it was like this. He looked at the growling Maetel, and the smiling Sienna. In the end, they were innocent children. When they grow older, their feelings would mature, and their behavior would get better too.

It wasn’t as if he hated the flood of honest emotions directed towards him. Still, it would be much better without all this great fuss.

“I like oppa and unni. It would be great if all three of us could get along.”

“I want to live in peace only with Artpe!”

‘By the look of things, it doesn’t seem things will calm down anytime soon.....’

Artpe kept letting out consecutive sighs as he continued to walk. He still had some complaints about his party members, but this was the start of the true hero’s party!

If things went according to the Demon King’s plan, Artpe and Maetel wouldn’t have discovered the experiments occurring within the kingdom. Or maybe they would have discovered it too late. It was supposed to be a massive Quest that should have cost them blood, sweat and tears to resolve.

Unfortunately for the Demon king’s army, Artpe had resolved everything at super speed. Artpe had messed up a long term plan that the Demon king’s army planned on exploiting for about 3 years! He had ended it in just one day!

The Archduke hadn’t even been able to progress much in the experiment that was supposed to turn humans into Demons, yet he had lost most of his troops. His influence had rapidly decreased, and of course, he was unable to receive support from the Demon. Artpe had basically ruined the plan of the Demon King’s army in one fell swoop.

The Archduke had already used an unjust reason to take over the throne, so the nobles that had hated him rebelled against him. In the end, the Archduke was overthrown, and he had been chased out of the country.

The new king was the cousin of the previous king. Count Hadein was placed on the throne, but he was merely a puppet of the nobles. Still, the chaos within the Diaz Kingdom calmed down, so it was still a fortunate outcome.

It took them exactly one year.

“Hoo-ooh. It seems trade has been completely restored. Shit.

This is why I wanted to get here earlier.”

“There are so many people here, Artpe! There are more people here than the people I’ve seen in my entire life!”

“Oppa, are we going to ride that ship?”

After a year, the hero’s party arrived at the harbor city of Frate.

Chapter 47 - Two Hero's Party (4)

There was no business in this world that always worked out as planned. Artpe's party was so off course from his original plan that the only thing right was the fact that they were traveling in a straight line. The travel was filled with sighs, complaints and shouting.

Still, nothing significant happened during their one week march.

He had bought the highest quality bedrolls from Mycenae for each of the party members, but all three of them had to squeeze into one. It was a very tight fit, but it was also very warm and cozy. Maetel was in charge of harvesting herbs, while he started the fire. Sienna was in charge of cooking. This was how the daily chores were divvied up. It was a fantastic yet simple setup.

They didn't possess many clothes, so washing them was quite simple using Artpe's magic. There probably were few in this world that could travel as easily and comfortably as them.

They had traversed an incredible amount of distance in one week, so they had arrived at the first Dungeon one week ahead of schedule. The problem started when they entered the Dungeon.

It was a Dungeon where beast-type monster Gnolls appeared. They were humanoid monsters with a dog-like head. It was supposed to be a Dungeon with five floors with a variety of Gnolls ranging from level 30 to level 50.

Sienna was level 28, and she was of a race that could use powers that exceeded her level. This was why Artpe and Maetel merely had to make sure she didn't die. Aside from that fact, Sienna had free reigns to combat the Gnolls.

The Gnolls had similar build to a human, and they were quite clever. It allowed Sienna to gain a variety of battle experiences. Her level rose steadily as they traversed through the five floors,

and the occasional high level monsters made it easy to increase Sienna's level.

Artpe had assumed it would be this way, and everything went as planned. A week passed after they entered the Dungeon, and Sienna bravely reached the 5th floor as she increased her level to 47.

“Huh, Artpe? Didn't you say this Dungeon has five floors?”

The problem started from that moment.

“I did.”

‘In my past life....’

If it was Artpe's words, Maetel trusted him implicitly even if there was no evidence to back up his words. Maetel tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked the question.

“So why is there a staircase leading further downwards?”

“That is a really good question.”

Artpe glared at the secret staircase that had appeared as if it had every right to be there. He spoke with a fed up voice.

“I'm not sure either.....”

This was one of the Dungeon cleared by the past hero! He was sure it ended on the 5th floor. The items dropped here had been poor, but the weak hero had been able to develop her basic martial skills here. Artpe had found out this information when he researched the records.

Even if the Silpennon of that time had poor skills as a thief, Artpe never expected him to miss such an obvious secret staircase!

No, maybe the god was giving them something extra since there was an additional hero present?

He had researched about the human world and the hero, but he hadn't been able to visit all the sites himself. This was why he

waved the white flag. He had no way of determining which theory was correct.

Still, how could he retreat when a Dungeon's secret had been revealed? Traditionally, heroes entered into suspicious places first before asking any questions. They opened suspicious boxes first to see what is in it, and they stepped on suspicious traps first to see what happened.

They were psychopaths!

It wasn't as if they had extra lives to spare, yet they did things that were considered to be absolutely crazy. It seemed Artpe's party would be doing similar tasks that followed in the footsteps of those heroes!

"Sienna, the monsters we are going to face from now on will be a bit too hard for you to handle. This is why you have to be ready to retreat when I tell you to retreat."

As they got ready to head down the stairway, he made a strong entreaty towards Sienna. However, Sienna let out a bright smile as she tightened the fists equipped with the Battle Knuckles.

"It's fine. I'm strong now!"

"It is all thanks to me!"

Mycenae had a bright smile on her face as she stood behind Sienna with a money pouch in hand. She had finally succeeded in acquiring the Cleric's Cure spell and the Holy Battle spell. Artpe snorted as he shooed her away with his hand.

"You were barely able to acquire the basics. If possible, I want you to acquire weapon skills that are primarily for the Warrior Priestess class. Then there are the active skills....."

"You probably want skills and spell books that both of you can learn too?"

Mycenae laughed as if she already understood everything.

“I never dreamed there would come a day when I would be able support the hero. Anyways, please wait for me. Everything jumps in price when one wants to acquire goods so suddenly. I’m trying very hard to gather as many items at the cheapest price in the shortest amount of time possible..”

“All right. We’ll put our trust in ajumma, and we.....”

Artpe spoke as he took a step onto the stair leading down to the 6th floor of the Dungeon.

“We are going to go make some money now.”

It was as Artpe had expected. High rank Gnolls over level 60 started appearing in droves on the 6th floor. The Gnolls were equipped with decent armor and iron mace. These were opponents that was a bit overwhelming for Sienna.

Still, Artpe made a resolve to push her forward.

“When I think you are in danger, I’ll restrain them with my Mana Strings. Of course, your contribution would decrease, so you won’t be able to gain the full experience. The reward you will gain is ridiculously low compared to the danger you will face.... Still, you will surely grow faster than before.”

“Oppa.....”

If he just made sure she didn’t die, this environment would be a blessing for Sienna. Of course, she had to overcome the fear, pain and powerlessness she would feel facing such powerful enemies. Still, the fruit that would be waiting for her at the end would be very sweet.

“This is similar to the first Dungeon I experienced with Artpe. I had a lot of shortcomings, but Artpe helped me.”

“Now I can provide a much more precise and faster support.”

Artpe became more proficient at using Mana Strings as he used them more.

The Mana Strings were very sensitive and reactive to the movement of his fingers. He could use up to 10 strands. In the playground called a Dungeon, he could use them to search, deter, attack and defend. In the space controlled by his Read All Creation Ability, nothing could escape his will.

“Oppa.”

Sienna’s expression remained bright.

“If oppa says I can do it, then I can do it!”

“.....all right.”

He experienced facing too many opponents that were much higher in level with Maetel in the past year, so this all seemed par for the course. However, amongst the adventurers that explored Dungeons, their actions were beyond reckless. This situation was considered to be something that should never be done.

On top of that, Sienna wasn’t a hero, yet she had to go through such tribulations. It would be a lie to say that he wasn’t worried about all of this.

“Let’s do this.”

“Yes!”

However, Artpe had confidence in Sienna’s talent and will. He was also supremely confident about his own abilities. This was why he decided to go forward with her. The Gnolls shrank away at the presence of Artpe and Maetel, but they became emboldened when they caught sight of Siena. They howled as they attack Sienna as a pack.

[Ggae-gae-gaeng!]

[Koo-hwahk!]

Two thirds of the pack was instantly slaughtered by Maetel’s bastard sword. The remaining Gnolls flinched as they tried to run away, but Artpe prevented them from doing so with his Mana

Strings.

[Goo-ohhhhhhng?]

[Ooh-ohhhhhhhhhh!]

Some unknown force was preventing them from running away, so they became confused for a brief amount of time. However, when they realized there wasn't an additional strike coming as a follow up, the Gnolls once again turned their attention to Sienna.

Artpe gave an explanation.

“The dog head of Gnolls isn't just a decoration. They are very dumb.”

“I think they are more stupid than the Skeletons with no brains.”

It was the worst insult that could come out of Maetel's mouth. However, when one saw the Gnolls keep attacking with increased fervor as if nothing had happened, it was an apt observation.

“Koo-oohk…… I can do this!”

Sienna was the only one fighting them, and she had a hardened expression on her face. Her fists were still weak, and her self-healing ability was lacking. However, she didn't back down as she glared at her opponents. At this point, Artpe would have already given her a passing grade.

[Koo-ohhhhhhng!]

[Ah-oooooh! Gah-roo-roo-roo-roo!]

The Gnolls mindlessly howled as they swung their maces. Sienna quickly assessed their attacks, and she planted her fists into their abdomens. She couldn't avoid all the maces, yet she was showing excellent body movement for someone that wasn't level 50 yet.

“All right. We did it.”

“Yes, I don't think she'll die.”

Sienna was effectively fighting amongst the pack of Gnolls. Artpe

let out a sigh of relief when he confirmed this. Her growth plan had to be tweaked, but he also judged that she would be able to become much stronger in a shorter time frame.

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

Sienna was striking out with powerful punches. Her fist cleanly lodged inside the eye of a Gnoll as she was able to land a Critical Hit. At that moment, the flow of the battle started turning towards her favor.

[Kwehhhhhhhk!]

[Koo-hee!?!]

“.....hooo.”

Humans were supposed to be weaker than them, yet one of their own had been killed. This truth made the Gnolls rage....

However, a marvelous smile on Sienna’s face greeted the Gnolls.

Sienna just had an epiphany about the flow and momentum of a battle.

After two days within the Dungeon, Sienna safely raised her level to 50.

She used the Crystal Ball of Blessing to acquire the high rank Class as a Warrior Priestess.

From that point on, there was a jump in her growth.

As time passed, Artpe had to step forward less with his Mana Strings. It was proof that the degree to which she was contributing to the battle had increased. When they slaughtered all the monsters and found all the hidden treasures on the 6th floor, her level had reached 60.

“Still, we are fortunate that this place is easier than the Hero’s Dungeon, Artpe. Isn’t it?”

“Just the thought of that place makes me grind my teeth. Don’t

talk to me about it.”

“Where the heck did unni and oppa go that you guys speak of it that way.....?”

The Dungeon slyly extended into the 8th floor. Fortunately for them, the floor didn’t reach double digits like the disaster that was the Hero’s Growth Dungeon.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Hahp!”

In the Boss Room on the 8th floor, Sienna safely killed the level 75 Gnoll Chieftain in a one on one battle. Sienna proudly took its Sledge Hammer as a trophy.

The head of the black steel hammer was unusually large and sharp. It wasn’t something a level 75 Gnoll should be using. At this point, Artpe once again felt that the luck of the hero’s party was a cheat.

“Oh my, customer. Could it be that the metal used to make that helmet was.....”

“I’m not selling it.”

“Customer, you are too much!”

Mycenae appeared once again with impeccable timing. This time she hadn’t just acquired hand to hand combat skills. She had brought weapon skills too.

Mycenae was about to say something, because she felt sorry for the small girl carrying around such a large hammer. However, her words dried up when she saw Sienna swing it around with both hands.

“I thought it would take us one week to clear this Dungeon, yet we spent one month here. Mmm. Perfect. This is such a perfectly fucked up situation.”

“Because of me.... I’m sorry, oppa..... I’ll fight harder next

time!”

“No, you were fine. Actually, you really overdid yourself. The only reason why this situation is fucked up is because of god.”

“If so, I’ll kill god for oppa!”

He thought he had heard that line from somewhere before. He let out a big sigh.

Maetel once again showed her competitive spirit when she heard Sienna’s words. Sienna kept letting out a bright smile.

Afterwards, a similar pattern emerged.

Fortunately, there was no changes to the second Dungeon. However, they found a secret tunnel inside the third Dungeon that continued until the 14th floor.

While they were traveling towards the fourth Dungeon, they encountered a cursed old lady living in a small city. They had to waste time in curing her. Then the 5th Dungeon was a Dungeon filled with Undeads, and Sienna stumbled into a secret prerequisite by being a Warrior Priestess. A path of suffering opened up that led the party down to the 20th floor.

They encountered similar harsh difficulties on the sixth and seventh Dungeons. At that point, Sienna hadn’t just grown enough for a single person. She grew enough for three to five people to become an superb Warrior Priestess.

She smashed through all tribulation, which seemed to have been prepared for her, with her hammer. If she couldn’t handle a boss monster, Maetel and Artpe smashed it.

They had entered the Dungeons to help the development of the little Warrior Priestess.

However, the difficulty of the Dungeons were all over the place that even the heroes increased in their level. The word chaos was insufficient to describe their situation.

“Wow. That’s the ocean! It really is amazing! Pretty!”

“This is also my first time seeing the ocean, unni. Wa-ahhhh.”

At the end of the tribulation, they finally reached Frate. At the latest, he had planned on arriving here during early spring. However, they had arrived during summer when the warm winds could be felt. Thankfully, they hadn’t arrived here during fall. Artpe kept wiping away at the sweat that kept trickling into his eyes as he spoke to his party.

“Well…… Shall we go rest a little bit?”

“Yes!”

It was the day they entered into Frate.

Maetel was level 191, and Artpe was level 187. Sienna had reached the level 159.

Chapter 48 - Frate's Festival (1)

The inn owner gave Artpe's party a once over. He tsked as he spoke.

"A single night in the guest room will cost 5 silvers. The cost of the meal and bath water will have to be paid separately."

In the past year, the three of them had been under the influence of Maetel's Innate ability. They had grown a lot, so they no longer received questions like 'Are you kid alone?' or 'Where's your guardian?'

The fact that they didn't hear such words was a blessing, but.....

"Why is it so expensive? This inn doesn't look so grand that it should be charging 5 silvers!"

It was too expensive! A cheap inn in a big city should cost a silver. At most, it should cost two silvers! At Artpe's righteous indignation, the innkeeper snorted as he gave a retort.

"Do you not know what kind of a situation Frate is in? The numerous countries connected to Diaz by the ocean are participating in a limited-time auction right now. This auction was stopped three years ago, but it is being opened once again this year. The merchants from Diaz kingdom as well as other kingdoms are all gathered here. The streets are packed with people that came to spectate this auction. You should be thankful that there's at least one room left."

"It was stopped 3 years ago!?"

If that was true, it was no wonder people were all gathering here. When Artpe let out a sigh, the innkeeper took advantage of that moment. He started acting in a condescending manner.

"I've been saving that room. I was going to rent the room to someone that could pay a higher price. However, I'm being very considerate towards you and the two women. I'm sure they'll be

annoyed if you take them to somewhere that is more run down than this place.”

Artpe hadn't wanted unwanted attention, so they were wearing robes. The Artifacts they possessed was influencing how their appearance was perceived, and it was supposed to make them look average. However, it didn't allow them to hide their appearance. It was becoming more troublesome especially for Maetel as she got older, because she was becoming more and more beautiful. He wouldn't go into the trouble it had caused.

“Ah, yes. You were being considerate.”

“Of course. I'm not joking. You should go out right now to search for another room. No one will give it to you as cheap as me..”

Artpe could read what the owner was thinking. Basically, Artpe had come in here with two beautiful women(It was still more fitting to call them beautiful girls) on both arms, and he was jealous of Artpe.

This was why he was being verbose. He was trying to get the beauties to say thank you to him. He was old, but he was acting a bit cute. If everyone was as innocent as him, it would be worth living in this world.

“All right. I'll pay the 5 silvers.”

“Each meal costs 30 bronze per person. A single tub of bath water is worth 1 silver. Have you tried our store's buttered corn cob? It is absolutely amazing.”

“This is the first time in my life visiting this inn, so how could I have tasted it? All right. I'll try in once tonight. I don't really need the bath water. So...”

Artpe handed over 5 silvers and 90 bronze as he asked a question.

“When's the auction, ajusshi?”

“It's tomorrow.”

“The timing is uncanny.”

He had to spend a lot for lodging because of the auction, but in the end, this was a golden opportunity for Artpe.

Originally, this auction used to be held periodically in the harbor town of Frate. It had been the gathering place of various items ranging from specialty items made in Frate to Artifacts. Loot gathered from nearby Dungeons and ocean were had been gathered here. The auction had been the confluence of treasures!

It was very difficult to have a complete assessment of the worth of specialty items when one went into an auction. However, Artpe could clearly and accurately assess the worth of any items that was viewed through his eyes.

In his previous life, he had participated in auctions in the human world. He had cleared out all the treasures that the humans had failed recognize.

Of course, it had all ended up in the hands of the Demon King. The very thought of it made him wake up at night. It made him grind his teeth. However, it was no longer like that! He could pocket everything now!

“Why? Are you going to participate?”

“It is a festival that hasn’t happened in 3 years, so shouldn’t we take the opportunity to look around?”

“If so, you should take good care of the ladies. Gangsters always gather in places where there is money. If you go out with the pretty girls, you could probably fill an ocean with the men that’ll try to pick a fight with you.”

“I’ve already experienced it plenty, so you don’t have to worry about that.”

Artpe snorted as he took the key from the innkeeper. As always, Maetel and Sienna behaved as they watched him speak to the innkeeper. It was the absolute rule of the party. They had to leave

the negotiations with other people to Artpe.

“Ooh-wah. It is really small.”

The room had a single bed, and there was a lot of dust covering it. There was also a chair in the room. That was it. First, he used his cleaning magic. It took him two seconds to make the room look like it was new. Then he placed his bedroll on top of the bed to make it cushy. Next, he took out an enormous wooden tub that could easily fit two people with room to spare from his Dimensional pouch. He created water and fire at the same time, and he filled the tub with hot water. He created a cozy bathhouse where no one would disturb them.

“There is nothing Artpe cannot do.”

“You guys wash up first. I’m not sure about myself, but you guys are really dirty.”

“Let’s wash together!”

Maetel yelled out energetically, but Artpe pushed the two towards the wooden tub. Then he closed the curtain. Maetel and Sienna continued to complain loudly, but he completely ignored them.

They were now at an age where such propriety had to be observed. Their level was high, and they possessed warrior type abilities. So their development was much faster than the girls their age. Artpe decided to omit that line of thought.

“Let’s see...”

While the two girls were taking a bath, Artpe carefully leaned back on the chair. The chair was so weak that it felt as if it would give way at any moment. He gently closed his eyes as he stretched out his Mana Strings into the surrounding.

The Mana Strings went past the inn towards the large roads. Then they went past the large roads to the square. From the square, the Mana Strings extended out to the whole city.

That's right.

He was surveying the entire city from within the small room of the inn.

In the past year, the party had focused on Sienna's growth rather than the development of Maetel and Artpe. Above all else, their goal was to arrive at Frate, so they hadn't been able to raise their levels too much.

However, Artpe had focused on gaining command over his Mana String until he was sick of it. He also focused on increasing his proficiency in other magic spells. There were the basic everyday magic like Fire and Aqua. Then there was the Hyper Rubbing, which had been unexpectedly helpful in decisive moments. Obviously, Mana String had developed into being his main spell.

He had used all his spell whenever he had Mana to spare, so most of his spells had exceeded level 40. Amongst his spells, Mana String had reached level 51. No words need to be said, but the power and effectiveness of his spells couldn't be compared to before.

It wasn't just the level of his spells. Whenever he gathered money, he used Dungeon merchant Mycenae to gather spell books for all classes. He used them to increase his Magic stat. It resulted in his Magic stat reaching 1,200 when he was at level 187.

In his prior life, Artpe had gone past the 1,200 mark when he had reached level 300. His magical energy reached a realm where his level couldn't be used to gauge his power. Moreover, he possessed enough magical energy to overcome disparities that should be impossible to overcome. He possessed that power within his hands.

His spell level was over 50, and he possessed a massive pool of magical energy. It had reached 1,200. It would have been strange if he wasn't able to search a mere city with his magic.

His Mana Strings had started out as several dozen strands, but

now it had branched into hundreds than thousands. In a flash, his Mana Strings had blanketed the entire city. The Mana Strings were able to observe everything near their vicinity, and all the information was delivered to their owner. Nothing could escape Artpe's eyes.

Nothing.

“.....huh?”

However, when he completed his search of the city, he wanted to deny the validity of his absolute ability. It felt as if he learned an information that should be present in this city.

‘There is no way..... There is no way she's here.’

He denied the reality of the situation as he strengthened his Read All Creation ability. Artpe was so taken aback that he had almost fallen over backwards in his seat.

Afterwards, the curtain was put aside, and the naked form of the two girls was revealed to Artpe's eyes.

“Artpe, you should wash now!”

“You guys should put on some clothes.”

Artpe had one Mana String ready in preparation. He used it to close the curtain again. His reaction speed was on par with the speed of a goblin shooting its poison dart. Maetel clicked her tongue quietly from behind the curtain. He ignored her as he gave them instructions.

“Once you put on your clothes, you guys should rest after eating dinner. Later, you should tell me what the buttered corn cob taste like.”

“What about oppa!?”

Sienna, who was putting on her clothes from behind the curtain, asked in surprise. Artpe let out a sigh. It seemed his body was now used to making that sound. He got up from the chair.

“I have something I have to do. I have to go do it right now.”

“Let’s go together!”

“You guys will blow my cover.”

In this city, it might have been better if Silpennon had been with him. In his past life, Silpennon had been awesome at sneaking around.

Unfortunately, Maetel and Sienna were incapable of moving around quietly. Maetel had used the authority as a hero to learn a thief’s skill called ‘Covert Steps’, yet it failed in making her able to move around quietly.

However, Artpe was different.

[Artpe]

[Level : 187]

[Stealth Lv19]

Even in his past life, there had been too many powerful beings around him. He had to learn how to move around quietly without being noticed. Now that all the skill restriction was lifted when he became a hero, his talent for being clandestine blossomed!

Of course, it wasn’t something he was proud of at all!

“That is why you shouldn’t follow me.”

“Chet.”

First, Artpe retracted all his Mana String before he stepped out of the inn. As he walked amongst the large population, he naturally activated his Stealth ability. He melted into the crowd. Then he closed his purple colored eyes as he took off his ring.

The hair and eye colors, which had been changed into different colors, returned to their original coloring. His appearance, which had gone through minor changes to make it average, returned to its original form. Of course, he had his stealth activated, so no one

noticed the change of his appearance.

‘As the throne kept changing hands, the efforts to find the heroes had died down considerably. They’ve already forgotten the names and description of the heroes. At a certain point in time, it became more about hiding our unique appearances rather than hiding our identities with the artifacts.’

Of course, they had been able to avoid considerable amount of conflict using the artifacts. Still, he had worried about the possibility of facing someone that could see through the artifacts. He would have to tackle the issue of explaining why he was hiding his appearance using an artifact.

‘Mycenae was confident that anyone below level 250 would be unable to see through it. I came to the same conclusion when I evaluated the artifact.’

This was why he had to take off the artifact right now.

His opponent was over level 250.

‘It might have been better to have ignored her.....’

Still, it would cause him way more trouble if she developed a weird misconception of him. This was why Artpe took the risk to assess his opponent’s situation. It should be fine if he didn’t get too close. It would probably be ok if he observed from afar.....

“Oh my.”

“Ah.”

He had been walking as he had such thoughts. As he walked amongst the countless people, his eyes met a woman’s eyes as if by a miracle.

When their eyes met, Artpe realized his Stealth ability had been seen through in an exceedingly easy manner. However, that wasn’t the only problem he faced.

“Ah, hello. Are you here by yourself?”

When the woman discovered Artpe, she approached him. Her cheeks were slightly red. She had long red straight hair, and she had striking blood-colored eyes. She was taller than most men, and she possessed a voluptuous body that 100 out of 100 men would turn to look at her. She was a beautiful woman.

Moreover, Artpe knew this woman better than anyone in the human world.

[Etna Carlyfate Mirecarde]

[Demon race]

[Level :376]

[She is bound by the Innate ability Absolute Control.]

‘I planned on observing her, yet I was caught on the outset. This is crazy....’

Artpe let out a sigh

It was the moment when he encountered the woman, who had been the 2nd ranked Four Heavenly King in his previous life.

Chapter 49 - Frate's Festival (2)

Etna, who was the leader of the army of thieves, had her eyes fixed on Artpe. As he met her red-hot eyes, Artpe kept cursing the gods inside.

‘This situation has become a big headache for me now. I wanted to move as quietly as possible, yet I was discovered by Etna. This happened despite the fact that she doesn’t have any Thief type abilities. Either god placed a curse on me or the Demon King placed a blessing on me. It has to be one or the other. I’m sure of it.’

In his estimation, it didn’t seem she was here on the orders of the Demon King. He assumed she wasn’t here for a mission. She probably had come here, because she wanted to participate in Frate’s festival. She didn’t have any of her underlings or equipments with her. There were other evidences that also pointed towards this conclusion. However, there was one decisive fact that gave the most credence to this conclusion.

The Demon world’s greatest chef would never send a midboss so early in the process!

‘Should I have ignored her? No, she would have found me once I decided to stay in this city.’

Of course, his opponents couldn’t find out he was a hero unless they had the help of a high ranking priest. However, it was also true that Artpe couldn’t hide his massive reservoir of magical energy.

She was at the pinnacle of the Demon race, so she probably realized how talented he was as a mage. It really was something annoying, but the meeting between them was inevitable.

‘I have to get out of here without raising any suspicions. I have to come up with an idea. I have to think....’

“I...if you aren’t with anyone, would you like to go have a drink

with me?”

“.....ehng?”

Artpe had been very tense, but he came back to his senses at that moment. No matter how he thought about it, she was using a line to pick him up. When he looked at her expression, he realized, she wasn't paying attention to his magical energy. She was focused on Artpe himself!

“No, I'm here with my girlfriends.”

While Artpe lived with Maetel and Sienna, he had become proficient at deftly turning aside their pursuit of him. He had instinctively turned down Etna. It was too late by the time he realized what he had done. He came to his senses, but Etna already had a sullen expression on her face.

“Is that so.....? Women theses days have great eyes. They already placed dibs on you despite you being so young....”

‘It seems she thinks I'm young....’

If she hadn't been one of the Four Heavenly king, she could have been the waitress A of the neighborhood's pub. This was how friendly she was towards humans. Even in his past life, she had been very attractive, so she was easily able to make a favorable impression on others. Moreover, she had an outgoing and sociable personality. This was why she had been given periodic assignments to scout the human world on top of her own heavy responsibilities.

‘Once I start thinking about my past life, the memories are endless. She isn't the Etna from my previous life. I wanted to focus on this present life, so she is the number one person I had to avoid..... Shit.’

“I do have a moment.”

“Huh?”

She was in low spirits as she turned away from him. Artpe could have left Etna's desolate figure alone. However, he thought it would be a great opportunity to be able to gather information about the current Demon King's army from her. He couldn't miss out on this opportunity, so he stopped her.

"A cup of tea should be fine. This is my first time visiting Frate, so it would be great if you could tell me about this place."

".....ah."

The beautiful woman's expression had been filled with disappointment, but now a smile blossomed on her face. How could she show her feelings so overtly? It was a wonder.

Etna didn't realize Artpe was already viewing her as a half idiot. She had on a bright expression as she spoke.

"Yes, you should leave it to me. I'll tell you everything!"

She was the past and current Four Heavenly King. He was the former Four Heavenly King turned into the current hero. It was the start of a weird couple's date.

Both of them had already done a cursory search of their surrounding. Soon, they decided to head towards a nearby pub.

The pub would have alcohol and other types of beverages. There would be no better place to talk, since they would be within a crowd of people.

"The auction that occurs periodically in Frate is called Frate's Festival. The size of the people gathered here, and the various specialty items and artifacts that shows up here makes everyone go wild for this festival."

"So are you here to participate in the auction?"

"Yes. Ah, you can call me Etna."

Etna told him her real name as a Demon. She acted as if it wasn't a big deal. If all Demons were as innocent as her, Artpe thought the

Demon King would have been killed at the outset.

“I’m Artpe.”

Since she told him her real name, Artpe did the same. First, Artpe wasn’t a rare name in this world. The second reason being it would raise major red flags later on if she discovered he had given her a fake name.

“Oh my. Even your name is cute.”

“You should continue with your explanation. In truth, I just heard from the innkeeper that it has been 3 years since the last festival.”

“You do know that the Diaz Kingdom was in turmoil recently? That turmoil has died down somewhat, so Frate’s Festival was recommenced. When the kingship of the Diaz kingdom changed hands, the humans followed the king’s example. They went nuts as they shed a massive amount of each other’s blood. Naturally, in the process.....”

Countless legends were born during this time period, and a curse had spread within the kingdom. On top of that, the Artifacts became strengthened. Humans, monsters, Demons and even Artifacts consumed the records of others to grow.

“So you are saying all those Artifacts will show up here to be auctioned.”

“Exactly. These items were reborn through the blood of the people. The people who made such horrors will gather here in excitement.....”

It was called a festival. He didn’t know who made up the name, but he had a great sense for naming it that way. Artpe and Etna shared a bitter laugh. It was as if they’ve promised beforehand to laugh at the same time.

She smacked her lips as she asked him a question once again.

“Do you want to have a drink?”

“I really want to, but I’m still underaged.”

“Then I’ll be the only one drinking. One beer!”

He was 14 years old, but his outer appearance didn’t fit his age. He looked pretty mature for his age. Still, he had a youthful face, so he couldn’t boldly order alcohol for himself.

While Artpe became shy about drinking alcohol, Etna tried to down the alcoholic beverage she ordered in a refreshing manner.... She tried.

“Ooh-ehhkh. It’s warm.”

She blanched as she put it back on the table. It hadn’t been her intention, but her action evoked another memory from Artpe’s past life.

‘She’s the youngest daughter of the Phoenix, and she had been blessed by hell fire. She was the pure one amongst the thieves. All flames obey her, but this means the cold rejects her..’

Anything she grabbed started to heat up. This was why she went looking for cold things throughout the year. This was also why he had gifted her an ice sculpture in his prior life. The ice had originated from the first winter of this world. It alleviated her need a little bit.

Of course, he hadn’t given her the present, because he had liked her. He had wanted another Four Heavenly King as an ally. However, the gift had been a little bit too effective. It was one of the choices Artpe had made that he always regretted.

She had misunderstood his intentions. Her affection towards him became much more intense when she thought he had liked her..... It also meant that ‘his’ jealousy had also intensified.

“The alcohol is too warm!”

“No way. Our beverages are very cool and refreshing!”

When she voiced her complaint, one of the waitress got angry with her. At that moment, Artpe smirked as he placed his hand on her cup. A faint light sparkled, and in the next instant, frost covered her cup.

“Uh……?”

“It’ll last until you drink it.”

“No way…… Uh?”

When Etna put her lips on the cup, she became surprised. Her scorching magical energy was still being transmitted into the metal cup, but a cold energy from the cup was neutralizing the heat.

While the heat and the coldness fought a tug of war, her alcohol maintained a cool temperature. It flowed down Etna’s throat.

“Oh my…….”

Etna felt the cold alcohol travel down her throat, and it elicited a deep smile on her face. She moved her face towards the still beaming face of Artpe. Her voice hardened slightly.

“You aren’t going to hide what you are?”

“I felt a powerful magical energy from you. It was strong enough to make it hard for me to breathe, so I know you are a higher caliber of magician compared to me. I’m sure you are able to see me more clearly than I see you. So what would I accomplish by hiding what I’m capable of?”

It wasn’t just that fact. He knew Etna was level 376, and she was the commander for the army of thieves. She was also one of the Four Heavenly Kings from the Demon King’s army. He knew all of it.

Despite all the knowledge he possessed, Artpe was exceedingly excellent when compared to those his age. He was weaker than her. This was why he decided to act like a magician that was naive about the outside world. He planned on being faithful to this role.

He activated a skill he developed as the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly kings. He activated his Method Acting skill.

“Didn’t Etna approach me because of that? You got close to me after seeing my magical energy, right?”

“Uh? Ah, uh. Huh? Yes!”

He made up a valid reason for her. He gave her an out where she would be able to justify her own actions. However, she had become flustered by his words. It was a very cute sight where it did not befit her age. Still, Artpe wasn’t into older women, so it had no effect on him! He drank the lemonade in front of him as he waited for her to calm down.

“Yes, your magical energy is absurdly outstanding compared to those your age! That is why I was surprised. Yes!”

“Fortunately, it seems you don’t plan on bullying me after learning that information.”

“There is no way I would have bullied you! Never!”

The surprised Etna started waving both her hands in denial. Even in his past life, Etna had avoided taking a single human life unless she was explicitly given a command by the Demon King. He was confident that she didn’t hold any evil intent towards him. Still, he had asked the question as part of a plan! He was trying to exploit a weakness with his next attack!

“Please I hope you understand where I’m coming from. Suddenly, a strong and pretty noona like Etna approached me. Isn’t it unreasonable to expect me to not to be on my guard.”

When she heard his words, Etna’s smile stretched from ear to ear.

That’s right! She was weak against flattery!

She kept grinning as she nodded her head.

“I’m not bothered by it at all. It’s fine. Yes, I just thought Artpe

was coo..... I had a favorable impression of you! Of course, age and skill doesn't always match up. Still, it doesn't matter how talented you are. You've reached a stage that can't be reached unless you go through several life-or-death crisis. I just thought that was incredible.....”

“You look young to me, Etna.”

“Hee.....”

Naturally, Artpe enacted a second wave of flattery. He didn't even need to see the result. It was a critical hit.

“Is that so? I look young. Mmm. Ooh-mmm.”

It didn't matter if it was a human or a demon. After a certain age, the ultimate compliment that could be given to a woman was that she looked young! The effect of this phrase was amazing! Her weakness had been assaulted, and the gap in Etna's defense was revealed!

Etna was so happy that she didn't know what to do with herself. Artpe's emotion remained cold as he watched her. He was using all kinds of methods to avoid becoming suspicious to her, and he was buying her good will. He was going to use the advantage he gained to acquire first hand knowledge about the Demon King's army. This was the only thought going through his head.

“So you really just talked to me out of curiosity?”

“Yes, that's rightof course.”

.....huh? He thought he saw a single cloud cross her constantly smiling face.

Was he mistaken?

He tilted his head in puzzlement as he continued his conversation with Etna. He had to find out what had caused the conflict of emotion on Etna's face, so he had to keep her here as long as possible.

“All right. I’ll put my trust in you. So you should tell me about other sights worth seeing in Frate.”

“Yes, I will..... By the way, if I order another beverage, will you cast another spell to keep it cool for me?”

“Of course.”

“Thank you! I want another glass of highball!”

At Artpe’s assertion, a smile akin to a full moon was plastered on Etna’s face.

He had done something so simple, yet she was truly happy. She really wasn’t fit for the role of the Four Heavenly King. He let out a bitter laugh inside as he faced her.

Her mouth opened easily.

“If we are talking about what you should do in the harbor town.....”

Around two hours passed from that point.

Their conversation started with Frate, but their conversation naturally moved onto other topics. Etna didn’t talk about the specifics of her circumstances to Artpe. Still, she talked about her everyday life, and she talked about stories that was reminiscent of what happened in their past lives.

Of course, he already knew her identity, so it was easy for him to decipher the current situation of the Demon King’s army through her stories.

‘It seems there isn’t another Artpe in the Demon king’s army. I’m sure about that.’

He had wonder if there would be another existence like Artpe, but with a different name. He also wondered if there was someone different with the same name as him. Neither case was true. It seemed no one in the Demon world was given the same position as what he was given in his previous life. Moreover, there was no one

who had possessed a similar ability as his.

He also learned something new. Unlike Etna's ranking in her previous life, she was ranked 3rd amongst the Four Heavenly Kings.

She mentioned three beings that were above her. He was sure by the speech and behavior she describe that two of the three was the Demon King and 'him'. It was the being that was ranked number one in his previous life. The remaining third figure must be the other Four Heavenly King!

'My existence was completely erased. However, it seems someone else was inserted as the new Four Heavenly King in my place. I wonder who it is? It was someone that was able to reach a higher rank than Etna. It seems nothing is turning out like my previous life.'

Of course, he couldn't ask her more detailed questions. It would basically reveal the fact that Artpe knew Etna was a Demon, and that she was one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Instead, he let out a laugh befitting his age as he spoke his next words.

"Etna, you are so strong, yet there are others that are stronger than you? I don't know which country's magic tower you are from, but it interests me."

"I'm not from a normal place. It is as you've said. I'm strong, but there are others that are stronger than me..... It isn't a place where a person with a normal heart cannot survive."

Etna's voice was as serious as it could be. When he heard her words, Artpe couldn't hold back a sigh.

It was something he had repeatedly felt in his past life, but he couldn't believe how lax this woman was. If he wasn't careful, she would probably reveal that she was from the Demon world by mistake.

Artpe tried very hard not to dig any deeper into Etna's words. He

was barely able to focus the topic on her.

He could see the anguish she had possessed from the moment she was dominated by the Demon King to the last moment he had died in his previous life. It was so clear to him that it was as if he could grasp them with his hand. He didn't know it, because of his Read All Creation ability. The anguish she was feeling was similar to what he had felt in his previous life.

Maybe, that precipitated it.

He gave up on trying to act like a child. He spoke with words that held a good amount of his true feelings.

“There aren't that many that is special from the beginning. One starts out with a normal heart, but it gets continuously chipped away by one's environment. In the end, it takes on a shape that looks special to other people. Others may think think it is special.... In truth, it is something that is egregious hurtful and sad.”

“Oh my.”

Etna's eyes turned round in surprise when she heard his words. Then she started chuckling. Her expression looked as if she had been sucker punched. Artpe realized he had made a very serious mistake.

He might have made a mistake that exceeded the ice sculpture he had gifted her in his past life.

“You are an angel sent from the heavens to soothe my heart. What should I do? I'm conflicted. Should I just wrap you up and take you away with me?”

“Please refrain from doing so. You will make my girlfriends cry.”

“.....yes, I'll refrain. However, when I meet you again, I really might not be able to hold myself back.”

As she spoke those words, she got up from her seat. Her chest

sensually jiggled, and every male eyes were on her. Her chest was large enough that it made one wonder if they were a burden to her slender body. Of course, Artpe was unfazed.

He was unfazed.

“Artpe, I went through the effort of talking you about Frate, so I’m sorry about this.”

“H..huh?”

“I want you to leave this city as soon as possible. You should do so with your precious girlfriend.”

“What?”

“Goodbye for now.”

Her last farewell contained a teaspoon of regret, and two teaspoon of anticipation. Artpe knew she had a secret she was keeping. Etna didn’t say anything further as she suddenly disappeared from her sesat.

Since she hadn’t left the city, Artpe could find her with his ability. However, he didn’t feel the need to do so. He had heard everything he needed to hear.

‘She wants me to leave the city? That means Etna hadn’t come here for sight seeing. That can’t be. There is no way the Demon King would use her at this juncture in time. This city doesn’t have any weird items or people. Maybe, it has something to do with something on one of the boats that will influx into the city.....’

However, Artpe couldn’t continue down that train of thought. He was so inwardly focused that he hadn’t been able to properly activate his Read All Creation ability. This was why he didn’t notice the two people that had moved stealthily towards him.

“Artpe!”

“Oppa, where did you go go by yourself?”

These rascals.... He was sure that their inability to move

stealthily had all been an act. Artpe let out a big sigh as he got up from his seat.

“Can’t I spend some quality time alone?”

“Then why is there a cup on the other side? Ah, I also smell a sweet citrus type perfume! Woman! It was a woman!”

“Wow. Unni is amazing!”

Maetel made a sharp observation. At such times, she didn’t seem dumb. She even showed qualities that would make her a great detective. Artpe absent-mindedly had such thoughts as he was interrogated under the clutches of Maetel.

Of course, he had no intention of leaving Frate.

This stage would truly be his from now on.

Chapter 50 - Frate's Festival (3)

Artpe had died. His life had come to a absolute end when he had been stabbed by the thief's dagger.

The thief clicked his tongue. He retrieved his dagger as he let out a sigh. The hero looked on with dazed eyes as she spoke with a voice devoid of strength.

“Silpennon…… Why....”

“There is no way that man had any intentions of coming to our side. He's our enemy. We have to kill our enemies. It will endanger you If you hesitate.”

“No. That isn't it. That can't be true, because he.....”

Before she could continue her words, the Mana in the atmosphere started to burn up in flame.

The magician had already sensed their enemy approaching, so she had quickly thrust her staff forward to cast a defensive spell.

However, the enemy's Mana exceeded what the mage could block. In the end, the hero's party all suffered from burns. The warrior acted tough by crushing a potion bottle with his hand, and he splashed it over the party to heal them.

“Unforgivable.”

A seething yet earnest voice of a woman rang out from the top of the castle wall.

“You bastards... There is no way.... I won't forgive you.”

“F...Four Heavenly King.”

“Fire Witch Etna!? He really called her here!”

“Look, Maetel! That bastard never intended to side with the humans!”

The warrior was appalled, and the thief yelled out as he grinded

his teeth.

However, the hero no longer heeded their words. The only thing she had eyes for was the sight of the witch clutching the corpse of Artpe. She easily pushed aside the thief with the brush of her hand.

There was a deep blood colored flame surrounding the entire body of the witch. However, it couldn't evaporate the tears that were falling from eyes.

"How dare you do this to my Artpe. He was my only remaining hope, yet you guys.....!"

"How laughable, witch! You've killed thousands to hundred thousands of humans. You've ended the lives of family members and lovers!"

"We are past the point where we can persuade her with logic. Everyone raise your magical energy. Let us kill our enemy."

The hero had become despondent at Artpe's death, so the archer calmly tried to lead the party. The archer had an arrow drawn back, and there was a thick cold energy hovering around the tip of the arrow.

The witch possessed extremely strong power of fire. This was also why her weakness was the most well defined amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Even though she was a much more powerful existance than the Four Heavenly King they had just defeated, there was a chance that they could win against her.

"Please help, Regina."

"Yes."

The mage calmly nodded her head, and she started chanting her spell. Despite them being overwhelmed by the witch's spirit, the fight would start now. She had trained too much as a magician to give up and back off so early in the fight.

Instead of changing the nature around her, she changed herself to be closest to ice. She reinforced the change as she created a new technique to resist against the heat. Then she placed the blessing of the Winter Queen on the members of the hero's party. It especially strengthened the cold energy placed on the archer's arrow to the extreme.

However...

“Ridiculous. How laughable! You cannot endure my wrath with just the blessing of the Winter Queen. You would have to bring the Winter Queen here if you want to do that!”

While she clutched Artpe to her, the Witch started to unleash a torrent of her power. It was as if she controlled all the flames of this world. From the depths much deeper than the foundation of the castle wall, magma started erupting from the ground. The magma quickly covered several hundred meters to hit the hero's party.

The heat emanating from Etna spread to the entire castle wall. In a flash, the whole region turned into a magma field. The party barely had enough ground to stand on. The sky was thick with clouds, yet it started to part. The gray colored sun of the Demon world appeared from between the clouds as the sunlight created a pillar of fire.

Several hundred thousand Fire Spirits cackled as they revealed themselves.

“Koohk. That monster.”

“We'll win this.”

The thief let out a curse, and the magician calmly made a declaration. Her words were echoed by the members of the hero's party, and it buoyed their power.

“It is too hot. I can't approach her.”

“You idiot. You should take off that can of an armor.”

“I can’t take this armor off. It is cursed.”

“.....who did it?”

The hero’s party was trying to resist the heat in one way or another as they got into formation. The witch quietly opened her mouth. There were enormous fireballs floating around her. Dozens, hundreds, thousands, hundred thousands..... They floated into the air to assault the hero’s party.

“Who killed Artpe?”

“It was me, witch!”

“.....no.”

Finally, the hero took a small step forward at that moment.

She had barely been able to steady her wavering eyes. Strength returned to the sword she was gripping.

“I’m the one that killed Artpe Hirtana Kelduke.”

“.....you did, hero?”

The witch twisted her mouth. She had lost Artpe, and things couldn’t go back to how it was. The violent flames matched her anger as it swirled around her body.

“Yes, I wanted it to be you. I wanted it to be you, so that I can hate without reservation.”

All the Fire Spirits turned to look at the hero. It was as if half of the world was against her, but the hero calmly opened her mouth in front of such a sight.

“He wanted me to tell you something at the end..”

“What did Artpe say! What was his last words!”

“He said he doesn’t particular like older women.”

“What.....?”

The hero had a small smile on her face. It was a smile that was

holding back her tears.

“It seems you are a bit slow. You were ditched.”

“.....hoo, hoo-hoo.”

Surprisingly, the witch Etna laughed when she heard the hero's words. For a brief moment, the anger of the Flame Spirits lessened a little bit.

“Artpe, you idiot. I already knew that from the beginning. You should have left some other words behind, you dummy.....”

“You.....”

Etna quickly stole a hand towards her eyes to wipe at her remaining tears. Then all the Fire Spirits gathered to revolve around her arms.

“In the end, it was me. In his last moments, he thought about me. Yes, that in itself makes me happy. That is why.....”

The flames exploded.

The daughter of the Phoenix gave a proclamation.

“I'll send you all to a painless death. It will only take an instant.”

“Bring it on!”

The hero also wiped away the remaining tears from her eyes. She flawlessly entered into her battle mode. She bravely charged towards the flame. The warrior and the thief followed behind her. The mage lifted her staff, and the archer notched another arrow.

The victor of the battle was the hero.

“.....”

“Ah.”

Artpe slowly opened his eyes. Maetel's face was close enough where their noses were about to touch. Maetel's eyes were round as she kept puckering her lips. She was slowly narrowing the distance between him and her. The Mana String appeared out of

nowhere, and it impacted on her forehead. She pulled away in pain.

“You are too much, Artpe!”

“Ah.”

Artpe ignored her as he replayed the scene he saw within his dream. In front of Artpe’s death, the Witch of Flame Etna had gone berserk. Then there was the hero Maetel. She refused to back down as she charged forward with a sad smile on her face.

This was obvious, but he didn’t remember seeing such a sight. If he did, it meant Artpe was an Undead.

‘Was it really what happened after I died..... There’s no way that can be true.’

After Artpe had died, his Read All Creation ability had immediately sent him into the past. This was why there was no way he possessed the memory of what happened after his death.

It had been a very long time since he had met Etna. Maybe he had created a dream with her personality and actions as a basis. He decided to accept that theory as the truth.

It was merely a false dream, yet he couldn’t easily forget what he had seen.

Etna’s scream continued to ring inside his head.

‘I was her last remaining hope.... If she herself told me that at the time, I might have fallen for her. I was also exhausted by everything at the time like her.’

It seemed his meeting with Etna had been a shock to his system. He kept telling himself that he hadn’t liked her, but he might still have some lingering feelings left for Etna.

‘Even if I do have some feelings for her, I have to throw it away. I won’t have to fight her right now, but since a madman like the Demon King still exists, I’ll eventually have to face her. I’ll be in a

similar situation as what I saw in the dream today.....’

A bitter smile automatically formed on his lips. On his opposite side, Sienna was still sleeping as she grabbed onto him. She mumbled in her sleep as she tried to find Artpe’s body heat again. He put the blanket over her, and he got out of bed. Maetel had woken up early like Artpe. She got up from the bed as she asked him a question.

“Artpe, what are you going to do today?”

“Originally, I planned on sightseeing various locations, and I wanted to participate in the auction..... Still, I don’t think things will turn out so well like that.”

He inferred it from what Etna had said to him yesterday. The Demons had inflicted a curse on the human world a year ago. It seemed the stage for the second assault on the human world would occur in Frate. He had no idea why, but the Demon King’s army always seemed to show up in the path of the hero. Still, he didn’t plan on running away now that he knew something was going to happen here.

‘In the first plan hatched by the Demon King’s army, the highest level opponent was level 100. Even if they hatched two or more secret schemes in the past year, the one in charge of this plan should be around level 150. The variable here is the Four Heavenly King Etna. It seems she’s aware of the plan, but the chances of her participating in the plan is low. I can say that with 100% surety.’

Why?

This was the Demon King’s style. If the Demon King wasn’t such an unreasonable idiot, the human world would have already been wiped out from the outset. In terms of magical energy and martial prowess, the human world couldn’t hold a candle to the Demon world.

‘Still, Etna already had a rough idea of how much magical energy

I possessed, yet she told me to get out of the city. Mmmm. If I see myself as an outside observer, I would judge myself to be around level 300.'

Of course, he didn't have any proper area of effect magic spells. His magical energy was really high compared to his level, but his true skill level was well below that of a level 300 magician. However, from the outside, he would look like a level 300 mage. This fact was important. It would allow him to use one of the indispensable skills of the Four Heavenly King. He would be able to use his Bluff skill.

'I don't think the Demon world would have invested a strong enough force to be able to stop a level 300 magician.....'

This meant there was only one answer left.

'They'll invade in a manner that would make one feel dirty just observing it.'

Artpe furrowed his brows as he thought about the experiments in Diaz. They had tried to turn humans into Demons. From the start to the completion of the Quest, Artpe's party had never been in danger. However, the Quest had been annoying, and it had done a lot of damage to the psyche of everyone involved.

He assumed it would be the same this time around. It seemed the Demon King was using a significantly different approach compared to his previous life. He was using a method that would put Artpe in the foulest of moods.

"Eh-eet."

"Hey."

At that moment, Maetel had seen him frown. Maetel spoke as she grabbed his cheeks. She kneaded it as if his cheeks were clay. She tried to get his face to relax.

"Don't worry too much, Artpe. It doesn't matter what happens. I'll protect Artpe."

“It isn’t me I’m worried about. Other people will be in danger.”

“Then I’ll save those people!”

She was second to none in the human race in terms of being dependable. It was also true that he felt much better at her boasts. Artpe smirked as he petted her head.

“Yes, I’ll put my trust in you, hero-nim.”

“Yes, you should trust only in me!”

That’s right. Artpe and Maetel were heroes, who possessed innate abilities. Thanks to Etna he was able to get a basic idea on what might occur here.

If he had the time to worry, it meant he should use that time to better use. It would be more productive to make preparations.

‘All right. First things first....’

If he was to point out what troubled him the most, the first thing to come mind was the curse.

It could make people act crazy. It could spread a disease. It could turn the water foul.

All of this could arise from cursed Mana.

He was absolutely certain that a curse was included in the plan of the Demon King’s army.

Thankfully, Artpe had a method of defeating curses. It was the Obsidian of Greed, which had turned into a first grade item during the first Quest.

If he used it in conjunction with his Read All Creation ability, he would be able to extract curses. It didn’t matter if the curse had been activated or not. It possessed a cheat-like ability.

There was still a good amount of wiggle room before the Obsidian would be upgraded into S Rank. If this venture wasn’t enough to push the Obsidian into the next rank, he could use his

Reinforcement spell to advance the Obsidian. He had trained the Reinforcement spell as much as the other spells for the past year, and it had reached level 43.

“If I have this, all curses will..... Uh?”

He had used his Read All Creation ability to frequently check his surrounding, but he hadn't checked anything within his clothes. He finally realized a serious change had occurred within his robe.

“It's not here?”

“What's not there, Artpe? Hesitation?”

“I don't have scruples in the first place.”

“Your love for older women?”

“I never had that in the first place.”

“Then why won't you kiss me!”

He pushed the hero far away, since she was pestering him. Then he conducted a thorough search of his robe, yet he couldn't find the Obsidian of Greed. The only thing to come out from his robe was the Demite's Gemstone, which had refined about 1/50 of itself, and the Chaos Egg.

No, it was no longer the Chaos Egg.

[Beast of Greed's Egg]

[From within the chaos, it had combined with a cursed item. It created the Beast's Egg, which is waiting to be born. It covets all negative energy, so it might hatch immediately if negative energy is provided.]

“.....ah.”

“Huh? Isn't this Artpe and my love's.....”

“If this is the fruit of our love, I don't want such a love..”

“You are too much!”

Artpe finally realized the reason behind the disappearance of his Obsidian of Greed. However, he couldn't ask the egg why it had eaten the obsidian. He let out a short sigh as he raised the communication device.

“Uh, ajumma……. Do you have artifacts, potions, or items that originated from evil……?”

Since he couldn't ask the question to the egg, he had no choice but to ask it when the being inside egg was hatched.

Chapter 51 - Frate's Festival (4)

[Customer, I told you you just have to find the nearest branch of Anywhere company. Jeez.... If you just wanted to hear my voice, you didn't have to come up with such a strange request. I would have picked up the call. Of course, I would do so if you paid me a bronze coin per second!!]

“We are currently at Frate.”

[Huh.....?]

It was as if he could see Mycenae tilt her head in puzzlement by the tone of her voice. Artpe smirked as he continued to speak.

“Ajumma, you are in Frate right now. Right?”

[Huhk. How did you.....]

Obviously, he had thoroughly searched Frate yesterday, and in the process, he became aware of everyone that resided within the city. He didn't have to remember the record of strangers, but when he did find someone he knew, there was no way he would forget that person.

[How did you know that!? It seems you are pretty good at stalking too!]

“Stop spouting nonsense. You should ready the items I need then you should contact me. I'll be waiting for you to contact me.”

[Aht. Wait a moment, customer.....]

Artpe ended the transmission, and he got up with a refreshed feeling in his heart. Maetel was giving him an odd look, but he knew she was going to start spouting some nonsense. He decided to ignore it.

“I'll be a bit busy going around the city. Will you be ok?”

“Yes, I'm not tired at all.”

It was to be expected. If a city could bottom out Maetel's stamina, it probably shouldn't be called a city.

"All right. Let's wake up Sienna, then we can head down."

"Isn't Sienna still too young? Since we will be doing something arduous, let's let Sienna rest. The two of us can do it."

A ridiculously thoughtful words had come out of Maetel's mouth. However, Artpe knew why she was saying such words. Arte let out a sigh as she flicked Maetel's forehead.

"Ah-yaht."

"Even if I sent out Sienna by herself, she would be able to take care of most of what we are going to do today by herself. So you don't have to worry about it being too tough for her."

"Artpe is an idiot who doesn't know how I feel!"

The three of them ate soup and bread before they went out into the streets.

Artpe already knew the lay of the land, and he knew about the population residing within the city. The information was registered in his mind when he explored the city yesterday. Now he just had to gather information regarding the additional people that will come into the city. He also had to find where the trouble would start today within the city while gathering the items he wanted to acquire.

"Huhk."

"Look at those women."

"They still look very young. What is the world coming to?"

It was as the innkeeper had warned. When the three of them walked the streets, everyone's gazes were on them. They appropriately took the precaution of wearing a hood, yet it hadn't mattered.

"Oppa."

“Heek. Why are they all staring at us?”

Sienna and Maetel were tense as they stuck close to Artpe. At this point, Artpe had no idea if they were sticking close to him, because they were afraid or they just wanted skinship.

Maetel tried to keep Sienna in check by acting this way, but she was becoming a role model for Sienna on how to act around Artpe.

Did she realize this fact?

If someone saw them, they would think they were sisters. Then there was Artpe, who was between them....

Of course, he would receive disapproving gazes.

Artpe desperately wanted a male member to join his party as soon as possible, but when he thought about the past hero's party, he knew it was a dream that would be hard to achieve. His only salvation was Silpennon, but for some reason, Maetel hated Silpennon as if he was a bitter foe.....

He let out a sigh as he reassured them.

“It's all right. I'm pretty sure not many people will approach us.”

Of course, it was true that it was hard to hide the appearance of the party members with a robe and a hood, but that wasn't the only reason why they were the focus of everyone's attention.

Maetel had two swords hanging from her waist, and Sienna had the Sledge Hammer strapped to her back as her main weapon. They were intimidating for most people on the streets.

It was said that beautiful flowers had thorns.

When the men saw the especially large thorns in the form of a hammer and long sword, no one was brave enough to approach the girls. Even if someone approached them, they would show the men the taste of their thorns.

“I did a cursory search of this place, and according to a reliable informant, something will happen here today. Let's nip that in the

bud, so we can enjoy the auction. That is our main goal.”

“An informant you trust…….”

Maetel had a sullen expression on her face. It seemed the citrus perfume from the day before still worried her. Artpe stroke her head as he soothed her.

“When we meet that trustworthy informant again, there is a high probability that she’ll be an enemy. That is why you don’t have to worry about her.”

“It isn’t as if you can’t fall in love with an enemy…….”

“You don’t have much free time, yet you seem to be crafting a pretty decent novel.”

“I...I’m ok with having one more unni.”

At what point did their education go wrong? Artpe let out a sigh as he created his Mana Strings. He didn’t do a widespread search like yesterday. He expended a small amount of Mana, but at the same time, he increased the efficiency of his search. However, it was a fruitless effort.

“There are a lot of ships docked at the harbor.”

“The really rare items should be coming in today. They aren’t just coming over the ocean. They’ll be traveling here over land, and the Dungeon Merchants will be using their Teleportation magic.”

It would be disappointing if the Dungeon Merchants didn’t participate in such a large auction. They mainly traded within the Dungeon, but the Frate’s Festival was a market they couldn’t ignore. They could sell the loot they acquired in Dungeons at an exorbitant amount of price, and it was a great opportunity for them to stock up on items that would be required by adventurers, who explored the Dungeons.

“This is why Mycenae is here too. She’s probably choosing which

items she wants to put up for auction.”

[Customer?]

Mycenae contacted him at the exact moment when he talked about her. He wondered if maybe she was the one stalking him. He was a bit nervous as he raised the communication device to answer her.

“What?”

[As a veteran merchant, I’ve rarely had to say these words.... However, I think it’ll be a bit tough for me to acquire those items.]

“Are you really a veteran merchant, ajumma?”

[You really are able to say such rude words without batting an eye! However.... Koo-oooooooooh.]

After a brief amount of time had passed, she spoke with a voice drained of energy.

[The artifacts and the potions of evil origins are strangely out of stock. I contacted the headquarters, and they are also out. Usually, such foul items have a limited market... Even the really useless ones have all been sold. However, the really powerful ones are being auctioned today.... Ah. The Death Knight’s helmet, and the Blood Gold Halberd I purchased from you will be auctioned today!]

“Ajumma, you are my exclusive merchant, yet you aren’t being of much help to me. Shall we nullify the contract?”

[If you really need such evil artifacts, you can purchase them at auction! There will be a lot coming out today!]

‘There is a high probability that something will occur at the time of the auction.’

Artped didn’t give any additional explanation to her. Instead, he asked her a question.

“So do you have items like the Obsidian of Greed?”

[.....oh my. The timing of your request is quite strange. All the Dungeon companies including the Anywhere company is out of that item.]

When he heard those words, a lightning struck within his head.

“.....could you repeat that?”

[All the companies are out of the Obsidian of Greed. The companies gradually ran out in order. Yesterday, the last two Obsidian left in the Anywhere company was sold. I don't know who bought it, but they paid a premium price for them. They purchased each of them for the obscene price of 10,000 gold.]

Artpe thought about it. This meant that he didn't have to make preparations for other possibilities.

No matter how he thought about it, it seemed the main plan of the Demon King's army was to use a curse!

Shit! No wonder!

Since the plan had failed last time, the Demon King's army must have done a thorough analysis on why their plan had failed. Now they had gotten rid of the main component that had interfered with their plan!

It was a very cute tactic!

‘The number of artifacts with evil origins is abnormally in demand. The curse has to be connected to the items. This means it might be a curse related to a human's greed, and the desire to slaughter others. No, wait a second. Now that I think about it....’

Artpe recalled the conversation he had with Etna yesterday. What was the topic they discussed with each other?

She said the Frate's Festival was being held after a 3 year hiatus. Didn't she say the artifacts that were strengthened through blood and tears shed in Diaz would be featured as part of this event?

Artpe had brought up the topic first, and the flow of the

conversation had been very natural. This was why he hadn't paid much attention to it. However, he remembered that she kept sighing as she showed regret when discussing the topic.

If so, the underlying cause of her behavior hadn't simply been about what she had experienced up until now in Diaz. It was an emotion born out of knowing the plan that was being hatched here. He had thought her behavior arose, because she was overly humane. However, this new theory was more compelling to him.

All the cursed, lamenting and evil artifacts were gathered in this festival. Then there was the curse prepared by the Demon king's army.....

'The thing that immediately comes to mind is the strengthening of a curse. Or maybe it might be a charm. Either way it'll rile up the emotions of the people. If it activates within this city full of desire.....'

The only thing that would arrive would be a festival of death and madness. The people excited about the revitalization of Diaz's economy would all tremble in fear.

Since the plan had exquisite timing, he couldn't tackle it. Artpe wanted to compliment the Demon King's army, since they outdid themselves this time.

However, he would have done so only if he still held the position of Four Heavenly King!

[Customer? Customer? Please answer me! You have the honor of being able to talk to me directly, yet you seem to not realize the worth of having such an access!]

"Thank you for the good information, ajumma."

[I'm not an ajumma! Please call me Mycenae!]

"Mycenae."

[Oh my......]

Mycenae's voice immediately melted.

[Look at how nice that is.]

“Since I've received good information from you, I'll give you a good piece of information to you as a bonus.”

[Oh my. You are even able to abide by the ethics of commerce.]

“You should withdraw all the items you submitted for today's auction.”

[You tricked me, you charlatan!]

“I warned you.”

Artpe ended the connection. It was up to her to make her own choices and actions now. The only thing that was important to him right now was finding a way to stop the disaster that was going to occur today using the information he just learned right now.

“Etna said I should get out of the city as fast as possible.”

Maybe, this was Etna's way of asking for help. Since she couldn't go against the will of the Demon King, she had searched out Artpe, who had high amount of magical energy and knowledge. Maybe, she wanted him to recognize her secret signals, so he could stop the Demon King's plan.

Maybe, he was reading too much into her actions.

It didn't matter which scenario was true.

It didn't change what Artpe had to do.

“Originally, I wanted to solve this in a lawful manner, but I have no choice now. Let's go, Maetel and Sienna.”

“If you aren't going to use a lawful method, how are you going to solve this, Artpe?”

Artpe grinned as he gave an answer.

“I'll use the way of the hero.”

“The way of a hero is an illegal method!?”

“This is unexpected.”

Maetel replied in shock, and Sienna giggled.

Artpe ignored them as he valiantly walked forward.

His destination was already decided.

It was the main square of Frate. It was where the Frate’s Festival would take place. There would be countless people gathered there. It was where the artifacts and greed was all gathered.

The auction house would be at the center of the Demon King army’s plan.

Chapter 52 - Frate's Festival (5)

“Waaaa. There a lot of people here.”

“There are a lot of security too. It seems our job might not be as easy as I thought.”

At this point in time, all humans were focused on what was going on in Frate. Of course, a massive number of people would be gathering here at the auction located at the main square.

There were booths selling food that they had never heard of before, and there was a decent amount of vendors selling children's toys. The eyes of Sienna and Maetel twinkled everytime they walked past a vendor. They looked like grown up young ladies on the outside, but at times like this, they were without a doubt still kids.

He had already expected it to be like this. He let out a sigh as he spoke.

“You guys can each pick out one thing you want to eat.”

“Ya-ho! I love you, Artpe!”

“Oppa, I want to eat those large candies!”

The hero and the Warrior Priestess started chewing on the candy-coated apple candies they bought from a vendor. They were quite innocent as they showed simple pleasure at eating the treats. Artpe took the precaution of trying not to draw attention of the people around them as he led the two girls towards the auction.

“Can anyone participate in the auction?”

“I heard a rumor that participation will be denied unless you can come up with at least 3,000 gold.”

“Three thousand gold! There must be amazing items being sold if we have to prepare 3,000 gold!”

An enormous public auction house had been constructed in the

shape of a circle, and there were a lot of people milling around it. Even if someone was murdered with the auction house, he didn't think people would pay much attention to it. Artpe turned around to look at the dummies swinging and playing around with the stick that had held the candy.....

“Eh-eet.”

“Ooh-boohp.”

Maetel had pushed the candy towards his mouth, so he decided to take a bite. It was a clean bite where the crunchy fruit within and the candy on the outside entered into his mouth. He tasted an almost unbearable amount of sweetness. However, that wasn't what was important here....

“This candy is cursed.”

“Huh!?”

Sienna and Maetel expressed their shock at the same time. It was to be expected. The candy had been so delicious that they were each having a second helping. They had no idea something was wrong. Artpe gave a light blow to the heads of the two girls. They were looking at him with round eyes, so he gave an explanation.

“You are a hero, and you are an Evil Reflector, who's also a Priestess. Our existence itself gives us immunity from most curses. However, that doesn't mean you shouldn't keep an eye out for curses. You guys have to develop your senses.”

“As expected, oppa is amazing.....”

The curse was one of the ones he had assumed would show up. It was a curse that would cause rage and madness. It didn't matter how much one ate the food infused with the curse. For a fixed amount of time, the curse would stay hidden within the body, and it would only activate when a certain prerequisite was met.

Of course, the items that met this specific prerequisite were busily coming towards the auction house through various routes.

‘Most of the vendors on this street are selling such products. Moreover, it is cleverly hidden, so one won’t pick up on it unless one possesses a decent detection skill. Even if one became aware of it, it isn’t something that can be easily dispelled. It is a very complicated curse....’

As expected, the situation was moving along in a way that he had predicted. The more important point was the fact that the curse of anger wasn’t the only one spreading across the city.

If he just looked around right now, he could see the curse within food and drinks. There was even a curse spreading through air. There were all kinds of curse that amplified emotions, and there were ones that turned humans into monsters. He even saw one that weakened people through his Read All Creation ability.

It seemed they planned on taking over the whole city. By looking at the size of the plan, it seemed they started preparing for this plan as soon as the kingship exchanged hands.

Moreover, the hero’s party arrived right when the large event was prepared to go off! It was to be expected.

Shit!

‘However, I can’t deny the fact that I’m able to move around more freely.’

Artpe waited for them to eat all their candies before he gave them an order.

“I want you guys to destroy this auction house right now. I want you to act crazy as if the curse of rage had been activated.”

“.....huh?”

The eyes of Sienna and Maetel turned round. However, Artpe repeated his instructions verbatim, so they knew they hadn’t heard his words wrong. Maetel was taken aback, so she shouted out her words.

“That’s a crime!”

“Moreover, that isn’t something a hero should do.”

“What kind of image do you actually associate with a hero!?”

Artpe didn’t go out of his way to explain that part to them.

“I want you to make your appearances a little bit more indistinct with the artifacts. I want you guys to pretend fight, while destroying the auction house. However, I don’t want you to make it seem you guys are intentionally destroying the place. You have to show no interest in the auction house. What do you think? It’s easy, right?”

“.....”

“...y...yes”

At such an absurd request, Maetel was at a loss for words. Sienna was barely able to answer him. Artpe continued his explanation.

“Currently, there aren’t many people within the city that will be able to stop you guys, so you’ll be able to cause a ruckus for a long time. People will solely pay attention to the two of you, and when you completely destroy the auction house, I’ll be able to achieve my goal too. When I finish my work, I’ll give you guys a signal. When that happens, you must get out of there without being detained.”

“But, Artpe, wouldn’t the auction be stalled if the auction house is destroyed?”

“Of course. However, if they use all the available resources, they’ll have no trouble starting the auction on time.”

“So what’s the point of us destroying the auction house?”

“That is a very good question.”

Artpe let out an evil laugh. He was holding the egg of the Greed beast that was waiting to be hatched. As if it could sense the curse in the air, the egg twitched. It was a pitiful sight.

“You’ll find out soon enough.”

There was an amazing amount of people gathered at the central square.

In the midst of them, Maetel’s anger filled voice (she was acting) rang out.

“You thieving caaaaaaaaat!”

What kind of intro was that!?

“It isn’t just one or two days. You are quite persistent in trying to get at my man! I can’t forgive you!”

“Koohk!”

Maetel’s powerful kick landed a direct hit on Sienna’s stomach. Sienna flew several dozen meters in the air before she impacted on the wall of the auction house.

“Kyahhhhhhk!”

“A...a person flew!”

“Run!”

The angle of her flight was beautiful. Miraculously, no one except Sienna was hurt. The impact was powerful enough to push the people crowded around the auction house backwards in fright.

“Diiiiiiiiiiiiie!”

Before the worried people could approach Sienna, Maetel came forth for a second round of attacks. Sienna didn’t even have time pick herself up before Maetel attacked.

She was gripping the enormous bastard sword with both hands, and she was focusing the strength of her entire body on that swing. Sienna was barely able to dodge it, and the bastard sword impacted on the wall of the auction house. The strength of the strike was transferred into the wall, and she easily toppled the wall.

“T...the auction house!”

“You are dodging like a little mouse!”

‘When did Maetel’s way of speech get so rough?!’

She’s acting, right?

After she indulged herself by making up a novel in her spare time, she gained this acting ability, right?

Please tell me I’m right!

Don’t tell me she is pouring out her real feeling by exploiting this opportunity!

“Hoo. Unni is a real scaredy cat.”

Maetel had made the entire city tremble in fear, and Sienna finally started her counterattack! She didn’t care if the people around her retreated in fear. She planted her main Sledge Hammer on the ground as she grinned.

“It seems unni is really scared that oppa will fall for me.”

“You……!”

“However, you do know that oppa likes younger women, right? Unni, you are already done. Oppa is mine now!”

‘You guys are only 1 years apart!’

“I...I’ll kill you……!”

Maetel finally activated her Berserk! At this point, she didn’t care about the defenseless people or the auction. The soldiers and the fighters associated with the merchant association could only look on in fear!

“B...Berserk.”

“She’s a Berserker.”

“A Berserker’s blind passion is making her fight! She is expressing it through physical violence!”

“This is the end! The city is ruined!”

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhhng!”

Maetel activated her Acceleration ability, and she charged forward at a crazy speed! Sienna desperately dodged the attack. Instead, another blameless wall of the auction house was hit by the bastard sword. It crumbled under the assault.

“Unni is acting this way, because you aren’t confident in yourself. Aren’t I right? Recently, I noticed oppa is laughing more for me than unni!”

Finally, Sienna let out her first attack! The Sledge Hammer was the ideal weapon when one wanted to destroy something. It was also under the influence of her destructive magical energy. The already large hammer became larger as she swung it!

“Hooht!”

There were few in the human world that could measure up to her speed, but she had lost her sense of reason through Berserk. This was why Sienna was able to dodge the attack easily, and the blameless auction house took the blow in her stead!

“At this rate, everyone within the auction house will die!”

“Stop yelling! You don’t want to become the target of the Berserker!”

“S...someone go get the head of the auction house!”

“Dungeon Merchants... Where are the Dungeon Merchants!”

“Customer, we want 7,500 gold to intervene in this fight! Ah, no. We require 8,000 gold! We require 8,500 gold! T...this is idiotic! The cost needed to intervene is incalculable!?”

“How dare you!”

The place was a crucible of chaos. The people there wondered if this was how hell looks like. Shouts, screams and Mana was all mixed all in as everything in the surrounding was being destroyed!

“I...if it wasn’t for you, it would have been just the two of us for

the past year!”

“It isn’t as if I want him only for myself, unni. You can share him a little bit! I want him too!”

“No……! He is mine! I won’t give him up to anyone!”

Maetel and Sienna was speaking with such venom and anger that it was hard to think of it as acting. As they spat out their words, the bastard sword and the hammer were swung at each other. Each blow narrowly missed each other’s body every time. It only destroyed the blamess surrounding.

The officials of the auction were trembling with fear. The Dungeon Merchants, who were talented in magic and martial prowess, hesitated. They wondered if they could really stop this fight.

Then there was Artpe. He wondered if he should just abandon the plan before Maetel really killed Sienna. He was conflicted as to whether he should just retrieve and run with the two girls.

“I won’t forgive yooooooooooooooooou!”

“Kyahhhhhhhk!”

At some point in time, Maetel finally got in a critical hit. Sienna was kicked to the floor, and Maetel had stolen her Sledge Hammer. Maetel imbued a massive amount of Mana as she brought it down!

Sienna thought she really might die if things progressed any further. She desperately rolled on the ground to avoid the blow. Maetel’s hammer blow was magnificent. It destroyed the stage. The traces of an auction house was nowhere to be seen.

“H...huh, huhk.”

“That is a technique that can be learned by a small number of Berserkers called Earth Break....!”

It was just a normal Bash skill.

‘Since the moment I’ve been waiting for is here, I should do what

I came here to do.....’

Artpe had been watching the sight from afar, and he activated his magic as he had a heavy heart. He imbued his Mana String with stealth ability. It held tightly to the egg of the Greed Beast. When everyone’s attention was on Maetel and Sienna, he used that moment to secretly sneak in the egg.

He moved it towards the absolute center of auction house’s stage. It was where Maetel had made a big hole with her hellbent attack!

He made sure the egg was buried, and he put dirt over it.

His task ended perfectly.

“S...stop immediately! I...I order in the name of the l...lord, Count Melud!”

At that point, the one in charge of Frate finally stepped forward. He was a noble, yet his safety wasn’t guaranteed. His legs were shaking, but he had shown up himself to stop the crazy girls.

It was admirable.

Artpe decided to give him high marks for it. Of course, the count himself didn’t look too happy~

“Uh. Firework.....?”

“Beautiful.”

As if he had been waiting for the lord to step forward, a pretty firework bloomed in the sky. Of course, it was a signal from Artpe that signified the success of his plan.

“Aht.”

“Ah......”

Maetel and Sienna was panting to gather their breath. They hesitated as they looked at the firework. Both girls clicked their tongue.

“Let’s finish this somewhere else.”

“Hoong. Do you think unni will win just by changing the venue?”

The two left as they provoked each other until the end!

Of course, the power they displayed was so terrifying that no one dared to stop them. It was possible for Maetel, but there were a good number of people amongst the Dungeon Merchants that would be able to stop Sienna. However, they weren't going to intervene unless it was profitable for them. The Dungeon Merchants abstained from doing anything.

The two criminals successfully walked out from the scene of the crime!

“This... What the hell happened....”

“We were unlucky, lord. Of all places, those monsters decided to fight here....”

“How can a man be worth all of this!”

“It seems this person is receiving the love of those two women. I don't know who he is, but I'm jealous.....”

“Jealous? It is obvious that man will suffer an early death.”

“Koo-hmm. That....”

Artpe cleared his throat as he released his Stealth spell. He appeared in front of the lord. Of course, he still had his disguise on through his artifact.

As expected, everyone turned their attention to him. Artpe felt like dying from embarrassment, but he opened his mouth to speak.

“That is..... They are my companions.”

“You are the one receiving the love of those two women!?”

“Uh. That's.....”

He was thankful that their fight had attracted attention away from him, but why the hell did they have to fight over such a topic! Artpe kept sighing as he pushed one hand forward. A white

magical energy burned at the tip of his fingers.

“This important location was destroyed thanks to my party members. I’m not sure if this will be enough to compensate for everything. I’ll want to help you restore the auction house. Ah, of course, I’ll also give you money for reparations.”

“Ohhhhhhhhhh!”

The lord let out a acclamation when a rare mage made an appearance. Moreover, unlike his terrifying companions, he was full of common sense!

How could the lord turn him down?

The lord welcomed him. He even gave a promise to not chase the two girls if Artpe helped with recovering the auction house.

This was how Artpe joined in on the work of reconstructing the auction house.

They were able to restore it back into excellent shape.

The auction would be held later that night as scheduled.

Chapter 53 - Frate's Festival (6)

“You were quite bold in your actions, customer!”

It was Anywhere company's veteran merchant Mycenae. It had been awhile, since they had met outside of a Dungeon. Mycenae slapped a file against her knee as she yelled out in agitation.

“I had no choice.”

“You had no choice? Bullshit!”

She was wearing an artifact that hindered recognition, so she looked a bit indistinct. However, Artpe and Mycenae knew each other very well, so they acted very familiar with each other.

The auction house also kept the identities of the participants a secret, so each of them were wearing a mask that also hindered recognition.

However, all they did was affect the outer appearances, so if one wanted to know the other's identity, it could be discerned.

The auction, by its nature, couldn't publicly reveal the identities of its participants. So everyone kept their eyes down as they participated with this unspoken understanding.

Artpe grinned as he asked her a question.

“So did you withdraw your items?”

“There is no way I could have pulled all of it out!.... Fortunately, I was able to take off the ones that were going to be entered under my name beforehand.”

She called him a swindler and other bad names, but in the end, she obediently followed Artpe's words. It was pretty cute.

When Artpe had a broad smile on his face, Mycenae pounded her chest as if she was about to suffocate from the frustration she felt. Soon, her eyes turned sharp as she made calculations.

“Didn’t you say you needed my items? Will you be purchasing my helm and halberd?”

“Nope? I don’t need it anymore.”

“I knew it’ll be like this! How did I end up in an exclusive contract with such a customer!”

Mycenae felt so indignant that she threw a tantrum in her seat. Her ears fluttered fiercely. He ignored Mycenae as he raised his head. The sun was setting, and the moon was starting to peek out. He caught the sight of a cloud that changed its outer appearance as the ownership of the sky exchanged hands. It was a really splendid sight.

However, when he brought his gaze down, he caught sight of the stage of the auction house. He saw the numerous people surrounding the stage.

“Ha.”

They were hiding their outer appearance with artifacts, and their faces were covered with masks. However, they couldn’t hide their greed and madness.

He could see them so clearly that it was as if Artpe could grasp them with his hands. The curses looked like something that would detonate by itself. The fuse wouldn’t have to be lit. In his past life, Artpe had always been surrounded by such twisted beings.

They were disgusting and pitiful.

“You.... Ah, you’ve probably seen this sight quite often.”

“You are being shameless by changing the topic like this.... Yes, I’ve seen it so much that I’m sick of it. Still, I’m one of them. I’m just able to hide my greed a little bit better than them.”

“I like your honesty. Truthfully, I’m the same.”

They were currently sitting in the upper seats where only the VIPs amongst the participants could enter.

Artpe was invited here, because he had been instrumental in restoring the auction house. Before he knew it, Mycenae came and sat besides him. He had thought she had been exaggerating with her words about being a veteran merchant, but it seemed she held a pretty high position.

“Ooh-mmmm?”

For a long time, Artpe checked the seats around him. Mycenae tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked him a question.

“Where are the other two.....?”

“I don't know where they went.”

It was a lie. He knew where they were. He had worried they would go outside to fight a life or death battle. Fortunately, they had hidden themselves as they returned to the inn. They were probably resting right now.

Yes, their mission had ended. It was now Artpe's stage.

.....well, if he needed something from them, he just had to call them back.

“Hoo-hooht. That means I'll have you to myself tonight.”

“Yes, it really is a great place for a date.”

Mycenae put on her business smile, and Artpe responded with a rotten smile. Mycenae laughed as if she knew meaning behind his words. Artpe looked behind her, and he caught sight of a woman sitting not too far away.

She wore a very fancy red butterfly mask. It could not hide her bewitching beauty.....

“.....bbah-doo-doo-doohk.”

It was the sight of Etna Carlyfate Mirecard, who was fully charged with anger.

“Heek.”

She had taken a big risk in giving him a warning. Instead of leaving the city, he was being shameless by coming to the most dangerous location within the city. Moreover, he was laughing it up besides a woman, so of course, she was angry!

“Uh, this might be dangerous. Someone might die.”

“Did you suddenly catch a fatal disease, customer?”

“I'm not talking about myself. I'm talking about ajumma.”

“Why me?”

Artpe quickly looked away from Etna, but he knew her gaze hadn't faltered. He could feel her gaze on him. Soon, Mycenae picked up on the eyes upon them.

“You really are talented in picking up women.... You really outdid yourself by getting such an amazing beauty.”

“If someone else hears you, they'll be under the wrong impression.”

Of course, the most messed up part was that her words weren't a mischaracterization of this situation.

No, he knew she loved Artpe in her past life, but even if he looked mature for his age, he was only a 14 year old brat! He was well aware that she had lived over several hundred years at the very least, yet she had her heart stolen by a 14 year old brat! Was that woman really of sound mind!

“What are the guards doing? They should be arresting such a woman.”

“Even at a glance, she looks really strong. Is she perhaps stronger than you?”

“Yes, a thousand of me could attack her at once, and we won't be able to win against her.”

“If she is that strong, guards...no even a nation would be unable to detain her.huh?”

At his words, Mycenae's eyes turned round.

"Does that mean that woman is a D...."

"It is great that you are quick on the uptake, but you shouldn't say it out loud."

"My god. Does this mean this auction has Dem-ah-ooop-ooop!"

"Quiet."

As expected of a veteran merchant, Mycenae had quickly assessed the situation, and she expressed her shock. Artpe quickly put a hand over her mouth. If someone heard her, the timeline of the chaos that would erupt here would be accelerated.!

"Ooh-ooop-ooop! Oop!"

"Are you going to be quiet?"

"Oop!"

Mycenae desperately nodded her head, so he took his hand away from her mouth. She immediately grabbed his arm, and he yelled out in a small voice.

"We have to run away immediately, customer!"

"Why the hell would I run away? The Quest is already in progress. I can't run away."

"This Quest has no reward. Let's abandon it! You should run away quickly with me!"

"What do you mean by there is no reward?"

Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement over that portion of her words. Mycenea's expression turned blank when he answered her. Even at this moment, countless artifacts filled deceit and evil was gathering here. Then there were the energy from humans and the Demons he was aiming for. It would all be his. He had a satisfied smile on his face.

"They are all mine."

“What……?”

If it was all for Artpe, what would happen to the people gathered here to participate in the auction?

She was sure Artpe didn't have that much money. Moreover, he couldn't just steal the items through brute force. She had no idea what he was thinking, but Mycenae suddenly remembered the brutal act of destruction he engineered not too long ago.

“Customer…… I still haven't heard the reason why you destroyed the auction house.”

“The one that destroyed the place was Maetel and Sienna. I know nothing.”

Artpe easily ignored Mycenae's eyes, which was filled with suspicion, as he whistled to himself. He was being so impudent that she wanted to bit him hard. It was time for Artpe to persuade her to his side.

“I'm confident my obsession with money is on par with any merchant here, but I value my life over all else. Even if you possess a Unique skill and great talent in magic, you won't be able to contend with the Demon race. That is why you should give up on the idea of acquiring those items and run away……”

“Don't worry about it. I'll protect you.”

“Even if you drop such a cool line, it doesn't mean that scary woman is going anywhere!”

While Mycenae and Artpe spoke in an intimate manner, the participants of auction continued to stream in. There were the nobles of the Diaz kingdom, and the movers and shakers of the market. Then there were the nobles and merchants from other countries, who had diplomatic ties to Diaz.

If everyone in this auction house was killed, it would cause mass confusion. The confusion that was sowed when the Diaz kingdom exchanged hands one year ago wouldn't be able to hold a candle to

what would erupt. If the worst case scenario occurred, Frate's Festival would never be held again in the future.

"This way, master."

"I'll be the one serving you today, your excellency."

"Hmmm....."

"I'm looking forward to this."

Of course, these people were well aware of their own importance. This was why they traveled with guards that were around mid-100s in terms of level.

The problem was the fact that every single one of them had the seed of a curse hiding within their body. When the curses were triggered, they would basically become excellent steeds that could be used by the Demon King's army. No one here would be able to escape.

So what would happen if Artpe stepped forward and said, 'This festival should be canceled'?

Would the people retreat?

He would tell them the Demon King's army is aiming for the human world, and they should disperse.

Would they retreat while saying, 'Ah. Is that so! It took us two months to get here, but since it is the Demon king's army, we'll go wash our feet and sleep in our home!'?

Would they really go back to their home?

No way.

Artpe would be fortunate if the people don't accuse him of being a minion of the Demon King's army. Then there was a chance that these curses were planted over a long period of time, and if he caused a ruckus, it might act as a catalyst in stimulating the curse. It might set off the curses for sure.

This was why he chose to overturn the board. He would act as if he was dancing to their tune, and at the last most crucial moment, he would completely reverse the cause and effect.!

“Are the two other customers going to bust up this place again.....?”

“I don’t use such lowbrow methods. Actually, that is the worst way to go about doing things.”

Artpe answered Mycenae’s words with a snort.

Mycenae wondered what Artpe was aiming for. She kept thinking about it, but she had no idea what it could be. She groaned as she moved her head into gear.

“It has something to do with the reconstruction of the auction house.”

“I’ll give you 60 points for that answer.”

“That’s a failing grade…… You are strict.”

“Eeeek. Artpehhhhh……!”

On the other hand, Etna’s gaze continued to be planted squarely on Artpe. Mycenae and Artpe (from the outside) looked as if they were sharing an intimate conversation. The sight made her anger boil.

At first, she had been worried and nervous about Artpe, who had come here by ignoring her words. However, such docile emotions continued to erode away as she watched him play with another woman. Her anger grew!

She was being like this even though Artpe wasn’t her man!

At first, Artpe thought she was inserted into the field to put down anyone that tried to interfere with the plan. However, her attention was marked solely on Artpe, so this didn’t seem likely.

Or maybe she was staring at Artpe, because she decided he was the most dangerous person here……. Anyways, it seemed she

wouldn't get anything done today.

'It is unfortunate that she is staring at me, but she won't be able to stop my plan. I am the puppet master today.'

Even as Artpe smirked, he felt his inner heart become a little bit heavier.

If Artpe hadn't been here, the plan of the Demon King's army would have proceeded without a hitch. Since she was at the heart of the site where the plan would be carried out, she would witness all the atrocities.....

She had an unusually weak heart, so she would become wounded by this event. It happened quite often in his past life.

She never had the time to recover. She continuously became wounded, and as her level climbed, her soul rotted away to a point that there was no way to recover it.

'She really is the type of woman that would do well living in the countryside while feeding cows.'

In fact, the problem was with god, who gave them such twisted destinies. It would be great if Maetel and Sienna grew up fast, so they could kill god!

"However, today will be different."

"Yes, customer? What did you just say?"

"Thank you for waiting so long!"

Mycenae seemed to have picked up the meaning behind the words Artpe had mumbled to himself. She was about to question him when the auctioneer appeared on stage with exquisite timing. The greed of all the humans gathered in the auction house was focused on the auctioneer.

All the artifacts had been gathered inside the auction house. The Demons didn't enter the auction house. They were spread all of the city and port. They smiled as if they were waiting for something.

As if it was blessing the hell's banquet that was about to start, the moon let out a bleak light.

[Ba-dump]

It was a very faint heartbeat that could be heard by Artpe. Artpe was sure he caught the sound, so he let out a laugh. The auctioneer, who hadn't heard the sound unlike him, let out a sonorous shout.

“The auction will start now!”

The curtain rose on the stage.

Chapter 54 - Frate's Festival (7)

“Two thousand gold.”

“Two thousand five hundred.”

“We’ve got 2,500 gold. For reference, this amulet’s prior owner was Sir Patra. He had won every battle he had participated in. He was executed after the rebellion when it was found out that his cousin had been involved with the archduke’s faction. The ability and luck of this item made its owner victorious in battle. At the same time, it has the curse of false accusation over it. In the hands of a good craftsman, its performance can be overwhelmingly improve!”

“Sir Patra..... I’ll express my admiration towards him by bidding 3,000 gold.”

“Three thousand three hundred gold.”

The greed of the people were used as firewood. The auction heated up. Most of the artifacts and treasures were sold for an exorbitant amount of price. People paid several thousand gold for each item. The crowd as a whole were going nuts.

The artifacts that were relatively low priced, bulk items and specialized items with no controversial stories behind them were all sold during the day. The ones that were being put up for auction were the absurdly expensive items, and the artifacts with questionable stories behind them.

“Next is Marquis R’s wife’s private.....”

“Five hundred thousand gold!”

“Seven hundred thousand gold.”

How could people get excited and pay a high price for a simple piece of cloth that holds no magical energy? Even if the owner was a beautiful woman, it doesn’t mean a piece of cloth would gain

some kind of special significance.

Artpe thought humans were truly foolish as he turned his head. When he did, he found that Mycenae was staring at him with displeasure. Artpe decided to make an excuse.

“You know what’s going on here?”

“Even if you are young, I guess you are male.”

“It isn’t like that. I wasn’t looking at it, because I wanted to buy it. I was curious as to the thought process behind the scoundrels that want to buy the lingerie.”

“Yes, I’m sure you were doing that. You are at an age where you should be very curious about such things, so it isn’t as if I can’t understand it.... However, you should refrain from putting your hand on your party members. It won’t end with a joke.”

“I already know, ajumma. I don’t want you to even joke about such a subject.”

Currently, Artpe didn’t fear the Demon king the most. He worried Etna or Maetel would come at him at night. He was worried they would assault him by throwing their body at him. He knew he would be on the losing end if he lingered on this topic, so Artpe changed the topic by force.

“Anyways, they already know each other’s identity, yet they don’t hesitate to buy such items.”

“.....it happens only in Frate. Everyone becomes a bit freed from their rank and power. If people become restrained when they enter the Frate’s Festival, it would cause an immense negative impact on Diaz’s economy. This is why no one is objecting when they know the underwear of someone’s wife is being traded.”

“Moreover, it has been 3 years since the last festival, and the power of the throne is as weak as it has ever been. This is also after the rebellion..... It holds all the ingredients that is needed to make things worse”

Moreover, the spoon of the Demon King's army had been placed in this pot. They had fantastic timing.

Artpe felt the upsurge in the atmosphere inside the auction house, and the curse was slowly being activated. Artpe could feel it through his entire body as the cursed artifacts started resonating with the activating curse. He let out a deep sigh. When Mycenae saw this, she must have had a slight misunderstanding.

“.....so do you want the underwear of Marquis R's wife?”

“I don't need it.”

“If it is underwear, I can give you mine. It'll be 1,500 gold.”

“I won't accept it even if you give me 1,500 gold.”

“Customer, you are very rude!”

“I'm better than the immoral merchant, who is trying to sell me her underwear for 1,500 gold.”

The tension within the auction house continued to build, and it felt as if it would explode if a single spark was introduced. At that moment, a new cart was brought in. It was placed on the auction house's platform.

Artpe unconsciously looked at it, and he became a bit surprised at what he saw.

“Next item is.... This is quite surprising! It is the longsword of Sir Edward Meletin, who ended the rebellion!”

“What!?”

“Sir Meletin!?”

The auction house was overturned once again. There were individuals that suddenly stood up from their seat. Some even unmasked themselves by mistake.

Artpe had been surprised by the artifact itself, but the people here were clearly surprised by the name of the artifact's owner.

He asked Mycenae a question.

“Who’s Edward Meletin?”

“Didn’t you just hear what he said? He’s the one that ended the rebellion. He was a knight employed under a nameless marquis, yet his sword was able to emit strands of fire aura. He burned the black magicians and knights that were under the Archduke’s faction. When he captured the Archduke, everyone was shocked! They thought a new powerhouse had made his presence known. It was speculated that he was one of the top-ranking knights with a level over 250. They wondered how and why this man had been unable to distinguish himself before.....”

“Ah. I see....”

So that’s how it was. Artpe answered without much energy as his eyes took in the longsword.

The complete information about the item was reflected in his eyes.

[Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness]

[The Fire Spirit Meltia was born from a volcano in the Demon world. She lived freely for tens of thousands of years before she was forcefully imprisoned by the power of a curse. Three types of metal mined from the volcano in the Demon world was combined to make a sword where she was imprisoned. The sword can emit an outrageous amount of fire, and it can burn everything it cuts. As a price for using this power, the user’s magical energy will be depleted, and in the end, the soul will also be harvested. The soul once again turns into the chain that keep Meltia imprisoned. This in turn increases the artifact’s power.]

“Of course, he wasn’t known until he acquire that sword.....”

“Huh? Do you perhaps know something about it? Aht! That’s right! If it is you, you should have the information regarding that sword.....”

“Koo-ooooooooooh.”

The sight of the description of the sword made him feel disgusted. He felt dumbfounded by it, and at that moment, he heard a groan from nearby.

He didn't have to turn around to know the owner of the voice. It was none other than Etna.

She was born from fire, and she held domain over all fire. A Fire Spirit was trapped within a mere item through a curse, so he didn't have to ask her to know what emotions she was feeling right now. Did she perhaps enter into this auction with the purpose of recovering this item? It made him wonder.

However, that was impossible. That sword was the trigger that activated the curse of the Demon King's army. He was sure of that point.

“Koo-oohk. Kooooooooohk.”

“Etna…….”

Artpe carelessly spoke the name of Etna. He quickly took control of his own mouth. What would be accomplished by calling her over? She couldn't go against the Demon King's orders. It wasn't as if Artpe could step forward in her stead to overturn the board.

“This sword of fire contains the valor of Sir Edward Meletin! We'll start it at 5,000 gold!”

“Seven thousand gold!”

“Eight thousand gold!”

The highlight of the auction was probably this flame sword. It didn't matter if one was a count, marquis, baron or a viscount. Everyone became excited as the price of the sword kept increasing.

“I have to buy that!”

“Sir Edward Meletin…… I'm sure it was that sword!”

As soon as they entered Frate, the curse that had been secretly building within their body started to reveal their teeth. The curse started to encroach on their body.

There were the participants bidding on the items, the people that were guarding the bidders, and the people that didn't have the money to bid. The ones without money couldn't speak out, so they were burning with desire. It didn't matter who they were. The curse influenced them in an impartial manner.

“Nine thousand gold!”

“Ten thousand!”

“Eleven thousand!”

“Twelve thousand!”

“We'll changed the minimum amount you can raise the bid to 2,000.....”

“Fourteen thousand!”

“Huh. This is weird. This is too....”

“.....it has started.”

Artpe realized the trigger had been pulled at some point. It was as the Demon King's army had intended. The desire of humans within the auction had reached its zenith, and it caused the curse to thicken. It was thick enough to be seen with one's eyes.

Then another curse was activated, and the curses started to stack. It was something even a level 200 magician wouldn't be able to escape easily. The trap was encircled around everyone's neck.

Then the Demons that resided in the port and the outer city started to make their move. Everyone was focused on the auction house at that moment. The Demons unhesitatingly emitted a vast quantity of magical energy to trigger another curse. In a flash, the curse reached its zenith, and it covered the entire city!

“Koohk!”

“Kyahhhhhhhhhk!”

Artpe had recognized it early on. The magical energy was formed into the shape of a magic circle. Everything and everyone gathered within the auction house was being used as ingredients. It was a magic circle that embroiled the entire city!

There was no turning back now. The whole city would be imbued with the curse. A very small spark could burn the city to the ground!

“Twenty two thousand!”

“Twenty six thousand!”

“My god.”

Mycenae was a Dungeon Merchant. As a basic requirement, her level was high, but her understanding of magic was also deep. Of course, even she didn't pinpoint what was wrong within Frate. However, she was well aware of the fact that the people were acting in an abnormal manner.

“C...customer, this is.....”

She wondered if she should just run away from here. At this point, she didn't care about her reputation as a merchant or the Anywhere company. She looked ready to cry, and by instinct, she grabbed Artpe's hand.

From the beginning to end, Artpe continued to remain in his seat. He grinned as he looked at Mycenae's expression, then he firmly held her hand.

“I told you I'll protect you. Don't worry about it.”

“.....”

Mycenae shut her mouth. The hand that was holding her hand was so dependable that she forgot that he was younger than her for a brief moment! She acted silly, because she had suffered a surprise attack by Artpe. However, at that moment, the situation was

approaching its climax.

“Thirty six thousand……!”

“I said thirty six thousand first!”

“Then thirty eight…….”

“Fifty thousand!”

“Fifty thousand……!?! Eeeeeeeeeek…….”

“I don’t have that much money. I don’t have that much money……. Shit. The treasure is right in front of eyes, yet I’m going to lose it!”

“If I can’t solve this with money…….”

“You dare!?”

It was very natural as to how the spark would be lit. Someone just had to unsheathe his sword or chant a magic spell, and it would spur the magic circle into completion.

The curse would be spread towards the city, and if things went well, it could spread to the entire country. It could even spread across the border to burn everything. It was a clean and bold strategy that wasn’t seen even in the legends or myths.

It seems the Demon King really put effort into this plan. If he acted this way in the previous life, Artpe wouldn’t have died!

“This is my revenge, you damn bastard.”

Artpe smirked as he mumbled to himself.

It happened at that moment. It felt as if blood was about to be shed inside the auction house when the sound of a roar rang out.

[Mwahhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Koo-oooooh-ook!”

“What the hell……!?”

The nobles and their knights had been about to confront each

other for the Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness. However, they all fell to the floor at the same time.

It wasn't just their movement being suppressed. The yell that had come from an unknown source had completely dominated their mind and body. The energy that had been making them act crazy was dispersed. It was as if they had just woken up from sleep. Their eyes turned round as they looked at their surrounding.

“What am I doing……?”

“M...my god. Tomas, I want you to put your sword away! We are supposed to fight with money, yet you are trying to show off with your martial prowess. This isn't an action that is befitting a noble!”

“However, his lordship.... His lordship gave the order.... Mmmm? What the hell?”

“Die!”

“Koohk!?”

While some people were confused, the ones that were still unable to break completely out of the curse were still in an agitated state. They were about to attack the confused people that had stopped in place! Once again, the roar filled the auction house.

[Mee-oh-ooh-ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

No, it wasn't just the auction house. The yell rode along the energy of the curse that was gathered inside auction house, and it spread into the magic circle formed by the Demons.

Of course, most of the curse's energy that was boiling up in the city was being 'eaten.' The trigger and the fuel was being consumed before it could explode. This was why the curse lost its energy before the people residing in the city had any idea something was wrong.

“W...what the hell is this.....?”

As a Four Heavenly King of the Demon King's army, Etna had to polish her senses over the countless number of years. This was why she was the first one to realize something was wrong. Her eyes turned round.

She knew that the auction house had been destroyed and rebuilt that day. However, she only sensed a strengthening spell that reinforced the structural integrity of the auction house. She hadn't sense any other trace of Mana. Who could have done this? Someone had casted a intricate spell that had tricked even Etna!

"No, the only one culprit that could have pulled this off was Artpe....."

Etna looked at Artpe with dumbfounded eyes when her gaze met his. Artpe had such a mischievous smile on his face that she wanted to pinch his cheek. However, Artpe opened his mouth before she could say anything. He just shaped his words without vocalizing it, but his message was delivered to her.

'I'll get it back for you.'

"Get back what....."

She unconsciously spoke the question out loud, but in the next moment, she shut her mouth. Artpe had casted a spell over the auction house. To be precise, it was a 'Spell Modification Spell' that he casted using the Greed Beast and his Mana Strings. There was still another step that had yet to occur.

[Kyahhhhhhhhhhhk!]

[Koo-haaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!]

"T...this sound!?"

The first stage of the spell was to let the Greed Beast suck in the curse that was supposed to spread into the city using the magic circle. However, the curse hadn't completely dissipated. The second stage of his plan was to send the remaining curse energy into the Demons on standby using the magic circle.

[Auction house! It is at the auction house!]

[Koo-hahhhhhhhhhhk! It is mine! I'll have it!]

All of the city's greed was focused on the auction house. Of course, the cursed Demons unhesitatingly headed towards the auction house.

The auction house had been at the center of the magic circle. In the process of reconstructing the auction house, he had used his Mana Strings to make a fundamental change to the magic circle!

"Demons! It's the Demon race! Demons appeared from all over the city, and they are rushing the auction house!"

"Then the abnormal state of our mind from a moment ago.....!"

"Demons! It's the Demons! We are being raided by the Demons!"

Everyone within the auction house came to their senses as they stood up. Artpe let out a leisurely smile as he watched this sight.

He had made fixes to the Record link, and he had transformed Sienna's curse. In the process, he had become quite good at modifying spells. He had access to the heart of the magic circle, so of course, he was able to make changes to this curse! It wouldn't have made sense if he was unable to do so!

"Customer, this is......"

"It was supposed to be humans vs humans. I just changed it to Demons vs humans."

Artpe spoke in a nonchalant manner as he laughed. Mycenae had no idea how he was able to use such a method. All she could do was stare at him with her mouth wide open.

"I had my eyes wide open, yet you got me Amazing."

Moreover, it was the same for Etna. She possessed abilities that was close to what a high rank magician possessed, but she didn't deal with highly difficult spells. Her ability was focused on making powerful magic using fire. Of course, Artpe was well aware of this

fact. This was why he was able to use such a bold strategy.

The items in the auction house was supposed to cause conflict amongst the humans, but the humans automatically lost interest in the items when they were faced with the prospect of facing Demons. Of course, those items were.....

[Mee-ahhhhhhhhhhhng!]

“Yes. You should eat a lot and grow rapidly.”

As its owner, he could vaguely see its form. The Greed Beast was eating the energy of the curse that was filling the auction house.

The egg was able to be hatched, because countless requisite was gathered and overlapped in this place. It was busy eating the curse and evil mana that was right in front of it. It would probably be able to materialize fully when it was able to eat everything here.

“Well, I should.....”

Artpe let out a truly satisfied laughter as he turned around. He could feel the explosive energy of the Demons on the other side. They were all bundles of EXP that would be good for him.

“...put the finishing touch on this.”

From the start to the end of the second Quest, everything had progressed according to his calculations.

It was time for him to acquire his reward.

Chapter 55 - Lunatic Wave (1)

Fortunately, the humans had one advantage on their side. The strongest people in Frate were all gathered within the auction house.

“What about the guards within the city!”

“The Demons aren’t an opponent that can be stopped with just the guards! Fortunately, it seems the Demons are mesmerized by something within the auction house. They are coming straight for this place.....”

“Mesmerized……? Wait a moment. Weren’t we also.....”

The humans realized that they had also fallen prey to the scheme of the Demon King’s army. They vaguely realized this truth. Of course, they had no idea that the plan had been broken and changed by Artpe. Fortunately, they were well aware of the fact that they would have been screwed over by the Demon king’s army if they hadn’t come back to their senses.

“Auction... We are stopping the auction.”

“We have to move the artifacts to safety…….”

“We shouldn’t waste our time on that! We have to face the Demons!”

“No, the artifacts are already gone! Was this also a part of the plan hatched by the Demons.....”

“How many times do I have to say that facing the Demons are more important than the artifacts!”

Of course, there were still some foolish people that desired the artifacts despite being freed from the curse. However, the Greed Beast had been busily eating the artifact, and in turn, it had forcefully canceled the confusion being felt amongst the humans. Some had wanted to take advantage of the confusion to slip away

with the artifacts, but the artifacts were missing. This was why they had no choice, but to focus on the Demons!

“This is all thanks to me!”

“Customer…… For once, could you answer my question properly?”

“I don’t know anything. My secretary handled everything for me.”

“You don’t have a secretary!”

He didn’t mind continuing the banter with Mycenae. Unfortunately, he couldn’t leave everything to the humans. The situation was too desperate to do so.

Even in such a disordered atmosphere, he scanned over the people getting ready for a fight. The guardian knights were pushed to the forefront by the nobles of Diaz, and there were the figures dispatched from other countries and merchant companies. Unbeknownst to him, Etna had approached him, and she was glaring at him. He turned to look at her.

“Are you going to participate? If you help, it would be reassuring.”

However, Etna didn’t even bother turning down his offer to join the party. She tackled a different subject.

“……Artpe, did you perhaps know this would happen?”

“What are you talking about? You were the one that gave me the hint.”

“But you……”

He was right. She had taken a risk in giving Artpe a warning. She did it knowing that her identity might be revealed.

However, she had taken a liking to this human despite it being their first meeting. She had been taken aback at how deep he had burrowed into her soul. The human had left behind a mark in her

soul. That was why she hadn't wanted to see Artpe get hurt.

No..... If she was being more truthful, she didn't want him to leave her behind in this scene of violence.

Artpe was a talent that was rarely seen in the human world. She had wished Artpe would pick up on the hint she dropped. She had wanted him to completely foil the plan of the Demon king's army.

She knew she had been wishing for the impossible.

She was under the yoke of the Demon King, so she hadn't been able to give him a proper hint. It would be ridiculous for her to expect him to have a complete grasp of the situation. There was no way he could have made preparations for this event. Even a hero wouldn't have been able to accomplish it.

"Yet I was able to accomplish something so hard to accomplish?"

"You can read my mind!?"

"Nope. I just made an educated guess. I thought you would be shocked at my damn fine abilities."

Etna was at a loss for words. Even if he had the ability to back it up, it was hard to act like this big of an asshole. If he was a Demon, she would have wanted to recruit him to become one of the Four Heavenly Kings. This was how big of an asshole he was being. As if Artpe could understand what she was feeling, he smirked as he once again asked her for her help.

"Let's stop talking about such nonsense for now.... So, are you going to help us?"

".....I'm sorry. I'm unable to do anything."

Yes, even if she wasn't given explicit orders not to do so, she wouldn't be able to side with the humans against the Demon king's army. At this point, she had basically acknowledged that she was a Demon with her own words.

"Yes, I guess it can't be helped."

If he was like any other human, he would have said, ‘You bitch! You are a Demon!’

Or it was the perfect time to say, “You filthy bitch! I knew it from the time you proudly swung your big chest in front of me!”. However, he didn’t say anything along the same line. On the contrary, it was Etna, who became surprised.

“How are you able to accept everything so easily!”

“I want you to get out of here quietly, Etna. No one here can identify your magical energy. ”

“So why are you able……!”

Artpe activated his Read All Creation ability, and he saw the dark magic shackles around Etna’s neck. It was something only he could see. After he glanced at it, he spoke.

“Sir Meletin’s sword. That’s the item you want, right? Just give me a location that’ll be convenient for you. After everything ends, I’ll look you up, and I’ll bring the sword along.”

“You……!?”

Even his parting shot was perfect. Etna felt as if she had been laid bare and thrown in front of him.

She wondered if her feelings for him was also revealed to him. She was angry, taken aback and a little bit happy. Her face turned red from feeling those emotions.

“How much do you know about me!”

“Everyone that heard you grind your teeth when the item came out could come to the same conclusion.”

“Ughhh.”

It was a lie. He probably knew all the secrets regarding the sword.

Despite this fact, he was going to do this for her….! Why! Her

confusion kept mounting, and it was getting hard for her to think straight. Etna was close to tears.

However, she had no choice, but to listen to him right now. She had lived for over 200 years, yet at this moment, she felt as if had reverted into being a child.

“The Demons are coming. Hurry, Etna.”

“.....I’ll be at Jaime’s Inn. It is in sector C.”

He memorized the information then he nodded his head.

“I’ll be there.”

“Also.....”

Etna hesitated for a brief moment. She was barely successful in picking out a word that she would be able impart to him.

“Ocean.”

“Ocean? What about the ocean... Huh? Wait a moment.”

The word had come out of left field, but Artpe suddenly had a thought. He quickly turned his head, but Etna was already gone. This hint was direct and pertinent to the current situation, so he had no difficulty discerning the meaning behind it.

“This is nuts. It wasn’t just a one and done.....?”

“What does she mean by the ocean, customer?”

“It is an annual event that occurs in the ocean! You should already know about it.”

“Annual event..... Ah!?”

At that point, Mycenae had a complete grasp of the situation.

There was a reason why the Frate’s Festival had always been held early in summer. There was a reason why ships couldn’t traverse the ocean during fall and winter. As a merchant that was part of a merchant association, there was no way she wouldn’t know about it.

“Lunatic wave!”

“That’s right.”

Her eyes turned round.

“We shouldn’t be worried about the Demons right now! We haven’t put up the barriers yet, and there are several dozen ships docked at the port!”

“That is why we have to bring down the Demons as soon as possible. Shit!”

Artpe quickly moved towards the entrance of the auction house. The lord of Frate and his knights were already stationed there.

“Magician! Are you going to help us?!”

“Lord, once I help you defeat the Demons, will you wipe the slate clean for me and my party members of all our wrongdoings? It is your call.”

It was a deal that took care of the past and what was to come! The lord unhesitatingly nodded his head.

“It’s a deal!”

“All right. Then I want you to take all the guards to the port. I want you to shut down the port, then I want you to put up the barriers!”

“Barriers? What the hell are you talking.....”

It didn’t take the lord too long to pick up on what Artpe was implying.

“Are you trying to say the Luatic Wave is about to start now!?”

“I want you to think about the people and artifacts that were gathered for the Frate’s Festival. Then there is the curse that was placed here.... This was their plan from the start!”

Lunatic Wave.

It was a phenomenon that lasted from fall to winter. The

monsters residing in the ocean invaded inland.

All of creation was infused with Mana, and this included the ocean. However, the quantity of Mana within the ocean waned during the fall, and as a consequence, the Mana on land swelled. The monsters within the ocean was sensitive to this change, so they ventured inland.

Of course, ships couldn't travel the waters during this time period. All the regions with access to the ocean were sealed off before the fall arrived. Tall barriers were raised to block the monsters. This was also the reason why Artpe had wanted to cross the ocean before fall.

However, that plan been all for naught!

"It seems the Demon king's army can cause changes even to the rules of nature!"

"The conditions needed to precipitate this was sufficient. Currently, the problem we face right now is the fact that the city is an overwhelmingly attractive target!"

This particular Frate's Festival had been excessively grand. This resulted in a large number of humans gathering at this location, and in turn, it had also attracted a lot of sea monsters to Frate. Then the Demon race used various curses to amplify the amount of Mana within Frate, and all these factors induced the Lunatic Wave.

There was a chance that their curses had extended into the ocean!

'It was a single plan that caused two effects. Splendid. It was an excellent plan, you demon king bastard! Shit....'

What grinded Artpe's gears the most was the fact that he wouldn't have been able to prevent this situation even if he had known about this beforehand. Artpe had the ability to tangle up a magic spell, but he wasn't able to cancel the magic spell.

Artpe had firmly been under a misconception. He had thought

the plan was to cause the humans to fight each other. He thought it was a ploy to cause confusion within Diaz.

Wrong!

It didn't matter what method was used to precipitate this event. The goal was to activate the curses. The amount of Mana within Frate had to explode upwards. Even the Greed Beast that was going nuts right now had become a very good ingredient in inducing the Lunatic Wave.

He had done his best, yet it felt as if he had been played by the Demon king. It was a dirty feeling. It had been a long time since he felt the taste of defeat. He hadn't felt it since he was chosen to be a hero in this reincarnated life.

“Kyahhhhhhhhhh!”

“Get out of here, lowly Demons! Get out!”

“You dirty Demons! You dare invade human land!”

“You will never be able to look down on the power of humans again!”

The humans gathered here didn't realize that a bigger calamity was about to hit them in the near future. This was why each of them were spouting one liners in an attempt to look cool. Then they started fighting with the Demons. Blood and tears were being shed by the brave people. It would probably be a fodder for a future heroic tale. Maetel would probably look at this sight, and she would have said ‘Humans are amazing!’

However, Artpe had already expanded the range of his senses, and he could feel the ocean vibrate and heave. He could feel the sea monsters rushing towards them. He didn't care about some shitty hero's tale. At this rate, Frate would meet its end. There was a chance that Diaz might fall!

“Hurry, lord!”

“But this place…….”

“I’ll stop them with my comrades!”

“Koohk…… Understood!”

If Artpe hadn’t flaunted his power earlier, the lord wouldn’t have listened to his words. However, Artpe had shown his overwhelming ability and leadership in the reconstruction of the auction house, so his words made the lord move.

“Please take care of this place!”

“Leave it to us!”

The lord nodded once towards Artpe, and he quickly gathered his knights before he left the auction house. Artpe let out a sigh of relief. Fortunately, Etna’s warning hadn’t been too late. They might be able to avoid the worst case scenario.

“The only thing left is…….”

He stretched out both hands as he activated his Mana Strings. He let out a sigh.

The fact that he was able to twist the curse was great. Thanks to his efforts, several dozen Demons were out of their minds as they rampaged. However, if he had known the Lunatic Wave had been waiting for him in the near future, he wouldn’t have twisted the curse in this fashion!

“What are you going to do, customer? There are way too many Demons here that are close to level 200.”

“Are you going to help us?”

“Yes, and it isn’t just me. The other merchants are making preparations to do the same. It seems we’ll somehow live past this, but…… Customer.”

This woman should have lived a fair amount of years, yet she was scared of a lot of things. If she was like Maetel and Sienna, he could have just stroked her head. Unfortunately, it was impossible, since

he was still too short.

Instead, he firmly held Mycenae's hand once more as he spoke.

"Don't worry. Maetel will somehow come through for us. "

"Aren't you supposed to reassure me by saying, 'I'll somehow figure things out!' It would have made me fall for you for sure!"

"What do I gain from seducing you, ajumma?"

Artpe snorted as he raised the communication device. He had one that connected him to Silpennon's party, and he had one that allowed him to communicate with Mycenae. Of course, he made preparations in case his party was split up. He had purchased a communication device, so he would be able to contact Maetel.

"Maetel, I want you to come towards the auction house as fast as you can with Sienna right now."

[Yes!]

He liked this about Maetel. He didn't have to explain the tiresome details to her. He could end things just by saying one word!

[I'll be there, Artpe!]

"Yes, I'll be waiting."

She was so dependable that it made him almost want to fall for her. After he heard Maetel let out an energetic reply, he ended the call. Artpe once again turned his gaze towards the battlefield.

The humans were weak compared to the dozen Demons present, yet the humans were putting up a fight. He had seen this several hundred...several thousand times in his previous life.

"Shit."

He was now on the other side, yet he had to put on the same mental attitude he had in his past life.

"Die, you sons of bitches!"

As he let out out rough words that didn't befit a hero, Artpe joined the battle between Demons and the humans!

Chapter 56 - Lunatic Wave (2)

“Kyahhhhh!”

“Humans, those items are not meant for you. It is meant for us to wield!”

“Koohk. You bastards.....!”

“These bastards are overtaken by madness! They were already strong, but now they are impossible to stop with the madness afflicting them.....!”

Artpe had flipped the curse, and it caused the Demons to reveal themselves to the humans. At the same time, Artpe had prevented the Demons from running away. He wanted to create a situation where the Demons would have to confront the humans.

His plan had worked very well. The Demons didn't even think about hiding their presence as they ran full tilt towards the auction house. However, even Artpe couldn't do anything about the strengthening effect the curse had on the Demons.

“Fortunately, the Demons aren't casting any magic spells.”

“They aren't of sane mind, so how can they calculate and cast complicated magic spells?”

Artpe snorted as he raised a finger. Mana Strings started to appear from the tip of his finger. One strand, two strands, four strands....

In a flash, several dozen strands were emitted, and they started to coil around each other. They formed into something that resembled a rope.

Of course, he didn't end it there.

“Hyper Rubbing.”

“You really are persistent about using that magic spell.”

After several dozen strands of Mana Strings were twisted into one, Hyper Rubbing was applied. In a flash, an immense amount of friction was caused. The Mana Strings heated up as Mana was consumed.

Artpe swung it horizontally. The several Demons that were trying to jump over the line created by the knights were all flung backwards. The level of these Demons ranged from mid hundreds to early two hundreds, yet they couldn't put up much fight against the attack. They were sent flying.

“Kyah-hahk!”

“Kooo-ahhhhk!”

“Oh oh! As expected of the Magician!”

“Hoohp!”

Artpe wasn't swinging a weapon with substance. It was a magic whip. This was why he could swing it tirelessly as he attacked the Demons from a distance.

Hyber Rubbing was applied to the several dozen Mana Strings, so even a short contact would create a violent backlash. It was as if the defensive gears and the skin of the Demons weren't even there. The Mana Strings broke through everything, and it even caused the flesh underneath to burn.

There was the damage caused directly by the friction, and the damage caused by the heat created by the friction. It was a result that couldn't be achieved through a simple fire spell.

“You can't see it when I'm using a single strand, but when I use several dozen strands at the same time, the Hyper Rubbing becomes much more beneficial to use!”

“If you have the time to leisurely give such commentaries, you should swing the whip more!”

Mycenae also had a weapon. She took out a long bow that looked familiar. Artpe realized that it was the bow he had sold to her after acquiring it from the Slime Dungeon.

“You bought that for your own use!?”

“Temporary! It is temporarily in my care! If I clean and repair it, I can sell it as a new item!”

Mycenae was nonplussed as she spoke words that made her sound like a scam artist. Then she changed the form of the bow. It was reborn as a ballista that was normally used in siege warfare. A large bolt made out of magical energy appeared. It was letting out a subdued silver light.

“You have to ensure that I’m safe, customer!”

“I don’t know. You should ask Maetel to do it.”

“You are being hateful!”

Mycenae fired the arrow through the ballista. She followed Artpe’s example by attacking the Demons from a distance. The damage was secondary to the fact that their attacks were restricting the movements of the Demons. It was of big help to the humans.

“Ballista!?”

“I don’t care what it is. The time is now!”

“Koo-ahhhhhhhhk!”

“Please let me send this as business expense to the Anywhere company!”

“Just shoot your arrows, dummy.”

There was one Demon, who hadn’t suffered under the full effects of the madness. Artpe’s whip shot out to surround the Demon’s neck, since it was about to chant a magic spell.

“Kahk. Kuh-huhk!”

“Good bye.”

When they received his command, the Mana Strings untied itself. It caused a powerful rotation. The already powerful friction increased precipitously as the several dozen strands of Mana Strings started to rotate. This was a marriage between magical energy and physical force. It was the strongest offensive attack Artpe could use right now.

“Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhk!”

It did have the downside of rapidly consuming his Mana, but the power of the attack was peerless. The Demon’s chant was canceled, and his life was also canceled. Artpe naturally absorbed the record of the Demon, and he sensed a natural swell of Mana surge forth within him. Artpe smiled.

“All right. It seems I went up a level. The Demons lose some of their power when they enter the human world, but their EXP remain high compared to the other monsters.”

“You are probably the only one in this world that treats the Demon race as a good source of EXP.”

The two of them swapped endless banters. Artpe kept swinging his whip, and Mycenae kept shooting the ballista.

The other humans were desperately fighting the Demons, but all the humans combined couldn’t touch the number of Demons they had killed. In a short amount of time, Mycenae had killed two Demons, and Artpe had killed three.

“I somewhat expected this, but it seems you are special even amongst the Dungeon Merchants.”

“If it’s you, you probably had an idea of how strong I am, right?”

“I did have some idea as to how strong you were.”

Of course, he was lying. He had more than a vague idea of her power. From the moment he saw her, he had a complete

understanding of her fighting power.

[Mycenae]

[Dark Elf]

[Dungeon Merchant]

[Level : 199]

[Archery Lv59]

[Mana Control Lv38]

If one was strictly talking about level, she was superior compared to Artpe and Maetel. She also lived longer than humans, and the Elven specialty skill level was extremely high.

The only problem she had encountered was the fact that she had advanced to level 199 two years ago. It basically meant that she hadn't been able to advance to a high rank Class.

If one wanted to become a Dungeon Merchant, it wasn't just about one's potential to become a merchant. One had to possess inclination towards fighting and magic. One had to be talented in a combination of multiple disciplines, so it was a very tricky Class to advance in. Many merchants let out blood, sweat and tears, because they were deficient in terms of fighting ability or magic. They were unable to advance for a very long time.

However, Mycenae was the opposite case. Her cultivation in fighting and magic was sufficient. She was overqualified. However, she lacked in her talent as a merchant. It was the only thing that was holding her back. She probably went around touting herself as a veteran merchant, because of her inferiority complex regarding this issue.

“.....customer. I know you find me to be pretty, but could you focus on the Demons?”

“Pfft.”

“You snorted at that!?”

Artpe retracted his thoughts as he focused on the battle in front of him. There were around 30 Demons left. Artpe and Mycenae were in a great spot. They were fighting from the safest location possible. On the other hand, many humans had already died at the frontline.

It wasn't as if there weren't any Priests residing in this city, but they weren't able to heal everyone and dispel the curses. There weren't anywhere near enough of them.

“Koohk. Is this how the humans will fall……!”

“Lord! Where's the lord! That coward ran away!”

“We have to make do with what we have. Don't falter and endure!”

“Kyahhhhhhhhhk!”

The humans let out a resounding shout as they resisted against the Demons. It was a decent looking picture, but Artpe could only let out a sigh.

“These humans are really weak.”

“Shhh, customer! They might hear you!”

There were only three humans that were over level 150. If they were inferior in terms of level, they should have learned how to work in concert with each other. However, they were brutes. The only method of fighting they knew was to throw their body at their enemies. They were basically on the same level as the grunts of the Demon king's army! This was why these two groups always killed off each other!

“Please support this side, magician!”

“Even if you hadn't said anything, I was going to send an attack!”

Artpe checked his remaining Mana. He still had 70% of his Mana left, but the real threat wasn't the group of Demons. It was the Luatic Wave! While he was controlling his Mana Strings, he turned

to look at Mycenae, who was throwing fire balls towards the Demons. He was checking up on something.

“Ajumma, do you have some Mana Potion you kept back in reserve?”

“.....I can't sell it to you?”

“I'll pay for it all later.”

“I've received your order!”

After unloading her ballista, she had a brief moment when the ballista was reloading. She used that brief moment to hand over the Mana Potion. He held it in his mouth as he increased the number of Mana Strings.

“Die, you maggots!”

One swing of the whip pierced through three Demons. He kept rotating the Mana Strings, and the whip kept letting out heat. It was almost preternatural as to how the whip found only the most vulnerable spots on a Demon's body to cause damage. The Demons suffered critical wounds.

“Kyahhhhhhhhk!”

“Koo-hahk!”

Artpe was prioritizing his attacks against Demons that were of similar or lower level than him. This was why he was able to pierce them easily. There wasn't much resistance against his Mana. The humans had no real understanding about Artpe's ability, so it looked as if Demons were being killed every time he swung his whip. Their morale rose as they cheered.

“The peerless magician is helping us! The Demons are so scared that they aren't able to attack us properly!”

“Rush them! It is time! Don't let this opportunity slip away!”

The knights and Dungeon Merchants shouted at the same time as they faced off against the Demons. However, the Demons were still

dying at the same rate, yet the human force was getting smaller at a faster rate. Basically, the humans were too weak!

‘This won’t do. How ridiculous would it be if we can’t defend against the Lunatic Wave, because of this?’

Even if it would disadvantage him later on against the Lunatic Wave, should he kill all the Demons right now by pouring out all his magical energy? It happened when Artpe was dithering.

“Hooo-ahhhhhhhp!”

“Eh-eet!”

“Koo-hahk!”

“Koo-ohhhhhh!?”

Finally, Maetel and Sienna had arrived at the battlefield!

“Huhk. Those girls were the ones that caused the big ruckus earlier…….”

“Berserker! That girl is a Berserker! Is she perhaps a Demon…….”

The nobles and knights, who were in the midst of fighting against the Demons, flinched in surprise. However, the two girls didn’t pay any attention to the gazes they were receiving from the other humans. They charged towards the Demons.

“Ha!”

“Hoo-oohp!”

Maetel gripped her long sword as she used Acceleration. It was as if she was sliding across the surface of the ground. Each time her sword lashed out several Demons were cut down. Sienna threw her Sledge Hammer. It crushed the head of a Demon that was about to break through the line of humans.

“She’s strong!”

“My god…… She wasn’t part of the Demon race!?”

Once she invoked her power, Maetel didn’t stop. She activated

Berserk to push the power of her muscles to the extreme. She planted her foot into the ground, and she shot forth like an arrow. She pierced through the body of a Demon.

“Koo, hahk.....”

“Next.”

The Demons that were left were all over level 200. They were strong, yet even in Artpe’s past life, the hero had easily ignored the level difference. The Demons were cut down with a single strike.

“No one here was able to face a Demon one on one, yet she killed it with one blow!?”

“Strong…… They are too strong!”

“Hoooooooo-ahhhhhhhp!”

At that moment, Sienna had reached the spot where she had thrown her hammer. As soon as she retrieved it, she filled herself with magical energy, and she stomped on the ground. The wave of magical energy had a widespread effect as it impacted against the Demons. At the same time, it imparted healing energy towards the humans. It was a main skill used by the Warrior Priestess. It was called the Divine Ground.

“Ggooh-ahhhhhhhhk!”

“What is that cursed ability!”

“Priestess! She’s a Priestess!”

“That girl was a Warrior Priestess!”

“The girl that was having a fight of passion with the Berserker was a Warrior Priestess.... It seems the temple has gone full monty.”

It didn’t matter where she was or what point in her development she was in. Artpe knew Maetel was crazy strong. The unexpected one was Sienna. She hadn’t reached level 160, yet the Demons were unable to anything against her attacks. It was a shocking sight.

No, she'll probably move past level 160 soon. Around half of the Demons here would be turned

Into her EXP.

‘Evil Reflector…… I knew that her race was created as an antagonistic force towards the Demon race, but I never expected it to be like this.’

Sienna's magical energy rebuffed the Demons, and all her skills contained her magical energy. This meant all her skills had the effect of dispersing magical energy of the Demons. Artpe had known all of this, yet it was entirely different to see her in action.

‘Can't I just make her the hero?’

One thing was for sure. The decision to accept Sienna as a party member was one of the finest decisions he had made in his life.

“That weak brat became so strong in just one year.”

It seemed Sienna's performance had also left behind a big impression on Mycenae. He smirked when he heard her express her admiration. He weighed in on the situation with his words.

“Humans normally change really quickly just like that.”

“That is the strength of the humans…….”

“Strength…….”

Artpe hadn't planned on praising the human race as a whole. The fact that humans changed rapidly was a strength, but it was also a crucial weakness.

‘Since she's a priestess…… Nope, that's fine.’

His mind had wandered during battle. It seemed he couldn't let go of the habit he picked up as the Four Heavenly King. Artpe clicked his tongue as he swung his Mana String.

“Let's wrap this up quickly. The night has just begun.”

“That is also my wish, customer.”

Mycenae laughed as she answered him. When her Mana arrow was reloaded into the ballista, a loud sound of an explosion was heard from the port.

“It’s here.”

Artpe clicked his tongue as he mumbled to himself. At that moment, humans and the Demons under the influence of the madness curse stopped what they were doing for a brief moment.

“Oh no.”

“This is nuts..... Can it be? It’s happening right now?”

“Oh my god.”

[Zeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!]

Afterwards, an ear-splitting sound rang out through the entire city.

It was an alarm magic that warned of an impending Lunatic Wave.

Chapter 57 - Lunatic Wave (3)

After the ambush by the Demons, the Lunatic Wave had arrived. It was said that unfortunate events happened in series. It perfectly described what Frate was facing

“Luantic Wave! I’m sure it’s the Lunatic Wave! Lord! Where’s the lord!?”

“He’s already at the port…… I see! The lord had already foreseen this!”

“I believe a Lunatic Wave happened during the summer time several hundred years ago at a different port city!”

All the port cities had guidelines for what to do in a Lunatic Wave. Even the guests visiting the city knew it.

However, even if one wanted to follow the guideline, it was impossible to do so with the Demons in their way. The knights finally realized the intent of the Demon King’s army, and they quivered in anger.

“My god. Did the Demons use the curse to induce the Luantic Wave!”

“The Demon King is sacrificing his subordinate Demons to bring Diaz to ruins? How laughable!”

Of course, the Demon King had no intention of sacrificing his subordinate Demons.

However, there was no need for Artpe to step forward, and say something like ‘In truth, I’m the one that made the Demons go crazy!’

“Koohk. Those damned Demons!”

“Die! Die! We won’t let you do as you like! You won’t bring ruin to Diaz!”

The people were going to die by the Lunatic Wave, while they

were fighting off the Demons. Of course, their heart was in the dumps.

Artpe had all killed all the Demons that were weakly affected by the curse. Those were the Demons that would have gone off script. Now the remaining Demons surged forward as they matched the intensity displayed by the humans. The Demons rampaged as if they had lost their minds.

“I was hoping the Lunatic Wave would be delayed, but those were merely hopeful thoughts.”

Artpe clicked his tongue as he looked over the battlefield.... When Maetel and Sienna had joined the fight, the battle had tilted completely towards the humans. After he confirmed this truth, he nodded his head.

“It’ll all work out somehow. As expected, Maetel is a cheat.”

Since Maetel and Sienna was at this site, everything would wrap up quickly. It would be good for him to stay here and earn EXP from killing the Demons, but Artpe’s abilities would be more effective elsewhere. Instead of the small confines of the auction house where he couldn’t move without getting into a fight, he would be able to borrow the power of nature to create a miracle at the port!

“Ajumma, I’ll be going to the port.....”

“.....ooh ooh.”

After he made a quick plan of action, he was about to move when Mycenae firmly grabbed the sleeve of Artpe’s robe. She had her head turned away to avoid facing Artpe, yet she had a firm grip on him. Artpe was dumbfounded, so he asked her a question.

“.....what are you doing?”

“Ah, it’s nothing. Shouldn’t we move after we wrap things up here....”

“.....”

It was a busy situation where every second counted, so why was she acting as if she was weak? He was about to yell at her, but he caught sight of Mycenae's ears. Her ears were fluttering delicately. Artpe's eyebrows furrowed.

‘She's been weirdly afraid, since a while ago. Maybe....’

Did she perhaps have Demon-phobia?

Artpe tested his theory as he took a step away from her. She let out a gasp, and she gripped him tighter. It was a completely different sight from the brave figure that had been firing her ballista by his side.

“You.....”

“Maybe you can take me with you? Yes?”

“Ajumma, how were you able to function as a Dungeon Merchant until now.....?”

Artpe let out a sigh. The tremble in her ears became worse when he moved away from her and when the screams of the Demons increased in loudness. He knew he couldn't do anything about this.

“Yes, I guess nothing will change if you leave this place. All right. We'll go together.”

“Hoo-ooooh.”

She let out a sigh of relief as she put away the ballista. Afterwards, she looked over the auction house one last time. There were people screaming their hearts out as they fought with their lives on the line. Then there were the people that couldn't exit the auction house. They couldn't fight, so these people were hiding.....

Then there were the pathetic humans that were trying to find the missing auction items with bright eyes. She also caught sight of the Greed Beast that let out a happy cry as it ate all the curse and evil energy.

“I’ll see you later.”

[Mee-ahhhhhhhhhng!]

Artpe whispered in a low voice, and the Greed Beast gave a rumbling answer. He had feared the worst case scenario might have come true. He had wondered if the Greed Beast would consider Artpe, who was the owner of the egg, as an enemy. Fortunately, the Greed Beast had acknowledged him as its master.

“Hooo.”

When he heard its reply, he smirked as he grabbed Mycenae’s hand. Then he lightly pushed off the ground.

In the next moment, the two arrived at a location far away from the auction house.

“Huh……?”

Mycenae blinked her eyes when her surrounding suddenly changed. She looked around as she spoke in an accusatory tone towards Artpe.

“I wasn’t able to sense you activating your magic.”

“Usually, the magic spells infused into Artifacts can be activated in a stealthy manner.”

“Customer, you have an artifact with Teleportation magic…… Uh-muh?”

Mycenae felt Artpe grip her hand again. He once again pushed off the ground, and they traveled a distance of several hundred meters. Her eyes widened when she saw this.

“Did you perhap use Blink right now!?”

“After I reinforced it, I’m able to move bring along another person.”

“This doesn’t make any sense. Blink was a spell developed as a means for a caster to escape from danger by himself-kyahhhhk!”

Artpe didn't give Mycenae time to reply as he used it once more. For reference, the boots worn by Artpe had reached this state.

[Blessing of the Wind Spirit's Boots+2]

[The black leather boots is infused with wind. It was reinforced twice with a special skill to be made into a legendary artifact. The user can use Blink five times a day without consuming any Mana. The Blink can also be activated when the user is being attacked, and anyone in contact with the User can be moved too. Additional Mana can be used to activate Blink. The additional Mana increases the travel radius by a significant amount.]

"It would be great if I can reinforce it one more time. However, if I want to reinforce it further, I'm going to need a Magic Stone."

"I've heard about the legends regarding enchanters. There are so many types of reinforcement enchanting skills. They can be temporary or permanent. There are ones that requires the user to fulfill a special requirement to activate it. There also ones that can be used on humans, inanimate objects, the environment..... Then there is the reinforcement skill that is above all other reinforcement skills. It allows one to 'overlap the reinforcement skill' on the same item."

"I didn't know the Reinforcement skill I earned was that type of Reinforcement skill.."

Of course, he had gained this great Reinforcement skill in the Hero's development Dungeon. It really was a bitter experience, but he couldn't deny the fact that Maetel and he had gained many important things in there.

"In that sense, I'm going to Blink two more times."

"Wait a m-kyahhhhhhhhk!"

The boots' Blink activated, and he was used to using it now. It really took them two Blinks for Artpe and Mycenae to arrive on the port's barrier wall, which was facing the ocean. The monsters were

crawling in front of them. There were more monster than there were high waves.

“We are here.”

“How can this be Blink? What the hell is....”

“Huhk! Magician! Also, weren’t you the merchant from the Anywhere company?”

“As always, I am in your care....ah-yaht.”

The lord was tirelessly moving along the wall to encourage the soldiers. He became surprised when he saw Artpe. Even in such a desperate situation, Mycenae was trying to go into her business mode. Artpe poked her in her side, so she would back off. He surveyed the situation.

“Fortunately, we are still at the early stages of the Lunatic Wave, so the weak ones are coming to shore.”

“Y...you are correct! However, we are faced with a problem. This isn’t the only region where the monsters will try to invade. Somehow we were able to raise the 1st tier barrier wall around the whole place....

“You encountered a problem when trying to raise the 2nd tier walls.”

They had built 3 stages of barrier walls to stop the sea monsters from entering the city.

Normally the 1st tier of barriers were buried deep within the water. It was raised when the Lunatic Wave was about to happen. It was easy to put in place, but it also meant that the wall was low. Basically, it could take care of the minor monsters, but the monsters above them would break through it.

The ships in the dock had to be isolated in specific locations for the 2nd tier of barrier walls to be activated. It was a barrier made out of magic. It was a barrier made out of a large concentration of

Mana, so it also had the effect was attracting the monsters to stay near the wall. It was a fantastic barrier, but....

“Everyone’s ships are docked at the pier.”

“That is a problem.....”

They didn't have the time to isolate the ships into their designated locations, so the barrier couldn't be put up. The fact that they were even able to raise the 1st barrier wall was an effort to be commended. The lord let out a deeper sigh.

“We tried to skip the 2nd barrier to raise the 3rd barrier. However, the ships that were parked between the 1st and 3rd barrier prevents us from raising the 3rd.”

“Hmmm..... From my perspective, it doesn't sound like a big problem.”

“What?”

Before Artpe spoke again, he turned his head to survey his surrounding. Everyone was busily moving around in an attempt to do their assigned tasks, so no one would be able to hear their conversation.

“Lunatic Wave is a natural disaster. Even if all the customers here lost their possessions, they won't be able to lodge a complaint against you. Isn't there a treaty between countries that specify this stipulation?”

“A...as expected of a magician, you are well informed.....”

“If you hadn't defended against the Lunatic Wave aggressively like you are doing right now, it might be a different story. However, you are doing your best right now, so they won't be able to place the blame on you. Isn't it so? You are working your heart out right now.”

Artpe's words completely untied the knot within the lord's heart. A small smile returned to the face of the lord.

“That’s right. You are right. Yes, I was worried for nothing. The lives of our people are the most important! Absolutely! Then we have to put up the 3rd tier barriers....”

“No, why are you jumping to that conclusion?”

“Mmm?”

The lord tilted his head in puzzlement. If the gesture was done by a cute girl, it was forgivable. However, an old man was making such a gesture, and it was really creepy. Artpe pushed down the urge to beat him up, and he continued his explanation.

“It is as I've said, lord. If we do our best, no one will complain even if we destroy all their possessions.”

“That is why I said we should ignore the boats to put up the 3rd tier barriers.... Ooh-mmm?”

At that moment, the lord finally understood what Artpe was getting at. The raising of the 3rd tier barriers weren’t their best option.... If they did their absolute best, they would be able to raise the 2nd barrier!

The lord’s face was filled with shock. At that moment, Artpe smirked as he continued speaking.

“In the process of us fighting hard, we can destroy all the ships. We can sink them all, and they wouldn’t be able must up a complaint. Aren’t I right?”

“Y...you.”

Devil! The Devil was right in front of him! The lord’s face turned pale as he shook his head. There had been a hint of a smile on Artpe’s lips, but now that smile deepened. The words that drove the final nail in was spoken by Artpe.

“If we are to do this, we have to do it now, lord. The figures from the foreign lands are all gathered at the auction house.”

“.....d...did you perhap put all of this into your calculation!”

When Artpe heard his words, the corner of his mouth lifted as he smiled. Yes, this was the moment he had been waiting for. From a deep place inside his soul, the instincts of the Four Heavenly king boiled up to the surface. He started bluffing hard!

“Of course! From the beginning to the end, I’ve calculated everything!”

Of course, he was lying.

The lord’s whole body shook at such ruthless and evil calculations made by the magician.

However, it didn’t take him too long to nod his head.

Chapter 58 - Lunatic Wave (4)

“Since we are going to do this..... We have to be as discreet as possible.”

“I’m not sure what you are trying to say. I said the possessions of the guests would be damaged during the heat of the battle, but I never said I would do something myself.”

“What?”

The lord had hardened his heart. He finally convinced himself to go along with Artpe’s suggestion, yet Artpe had given him such a shameless answer.

When the lord was about to answer him, an enormous merchant ship that was docked near them started to sink

This was happening despite the fact that the monsters were still being held back at the 1st barrier walls!

“You.....”

“Amazing! I never expected to a sea monster that can attack from long distance would make its appearance!”

“There is no way anyone would believe such bull....hoohp.”

The lord was using his reasonable part of his brain to tackle this issue. However, he shut his mouth when Artpe gave him a sharp look. Mycenae acted as if she had already stopped listening to the conversation. She started mounting her ballista on the wall.

“Ee-yah. It is an incredibly strong monster. That, that and that.... Those boats are all sinking.”

“Customer, it looks as if you are enjoying this more than anything I’ve seen you do before. Am I mistaken?”

“I...it is a terrifying monster. It’s a terrifying monster. Yes, a monster....”

Everything could always be justified by using force. The lord was holding back tears. He knew the truth, yet he couldn't reveal the truth. Artpe ignored him as he used his Mana Strings to sink the ships in order.

He made holes in the hull of some ships, and he capsized others. Artpe possessed the Read All Creation ability, so he could clearly see the internal structure of the ships. He was able to easily sink a ship by lightly swinging his Mana Strings.

“W...what the hell is going on.....”

“T...the attacks are coming from unexpected places! Everyone be prepared!”

“The ships are all sinking..... How are they doing that!”

The soldiers and knights had been busily running around on top of the wall when they caught sight of the sinking ships in the coastal waters in front of Frate. The sight boggled their minds.

What would happen if a monster with such overwhelming power attacked them instead of boats? Strangely, this particular monster was focused on sinking ships rather than killing humans!

“The ocean is already crawling monsters, so we can't run away through that route. However, they are specifically targeting the ships.....”

“The Lunatic Wave came much earlier than expected..... It will be hard year. However, we gained something when they sunk all our ships! Isn't that right, lord!”

“Lord!”

Everyone on the 1st barrier wall turned to look at the lord. He knew the dirty and evil truth, so he didn't have to fake his bitter expression. He raised his voice.

“We'll activate the 2nd tier barrier wall! Everyone aside from the members manning the 1st barrier should all come with me!”

“Yes, sir!”

“We will follow our lord!”

The fighting spirit of the humans were boiling upwards. The lord had a heavy expression on his face. It was as if he was asking himself, ‘Is it really alright to do this?’

However, it was true that they had gained more time by following Artpe’s instructions. The extra time was precious in defending against the monsters. The lord let out a bitter laugh as he lowered his head towards Artpe.

“Magician, may I leave the 1st tier of barrier walls in your care?”

“Of course. You should withdraw everyone from here. You should divert them to the 2nd and 3rd tier barrier walls. No, it isn’t just the barriers. Don’t you have a lot to do within Frate?”

“The fact that you are here during a crisis makes me feel very reassured..... Then I’ll leave this all to you.”

They had gained a lot of time thanks to Artpe, but this didn’t change the fact that they were still in a desperate situation. The lord hastily gathered all the soldiers and knights. They left to activated the 2nd tier barriers.

This meant the only ones facing the ocean on the 1st barrier wall was Artpe and Mycenae. No one else had stayed behind.

“Huh?”

Artpe was flustered as he mumbled to himself.

“He really took everyone!?”

“That’s what you get for bluffing and acting high and mighty.”

Mycenae grumbled as she loaded and shot her ballista. It pierced several monsters that surged up from the surface of the water. However, there were so many monsters that one could hardly notice the loss of these monsters.

“Anyways, you’ve already spoken those words, so you have to take responsibility. This might be obvious, but I cannot hold them back by myself.”

“Still, I never expected him to pull out everyone....”

As it was noted before, the 1st barrier wall was low in height. Since the Lunatic Wave had started not too long ago, the monsters they could see were small fries. However, monsters that could easily jump over the barrier would show up soon.

This was especially true for monsters that had the upper body of a human, and the tail of a fish.

When these monsters surged out of the water, their lower body changed into human legs. The merfolk were the greatest threat during the Lunatic Wave. When the merfolks made their appearance, it was fair to assume that the 1st tier of barrier was useless.

“I have to cover this large area by myself..... Whatever. I’ll do it.”

He had been unable to break the habit of bluffing. It had carried over from his days as the Four Heavenly King. He could blame no one, but himself!

Moreover, it wasn’t as if he didn’t have a plan he could use for this scenario. Artpe admonished himself as he vowed to become a little bit more humble in the future. Then he activated his Mana.

“Customer, it isn’t too late to talk to the lord.....”

“No, just wait.”

Artpe had an aggrieved expression on his face as he placed a hand on top of the barrier wall. He activated his Read All Creation ability, and he was meticulous in finding out the exact structure of the barrier wall that was separating the ocean and Frate. Mycenae had no idea what he was trying to do, but she was getting more and more anxious.

“Customer, there are so many monsters gathered at the base of the wall that they’ll form a mountain.”

“Just wait.”

“Customer, I caught sight of mermen and mermaids in the distance.”

“Just wait.”

“Customer…….”

“It is done.”

When Mycenae thought the barrier wall was going to fall in its entirety, Artpe was able to confirm the structure of the barrier wall. We succeeded in gathering all the information. When he raised his head, his frightening purple eyes flashed.

“Customer, that monster is about to cross over the barrier....”

“They won’t be able to come over now.”

As he confidently made the declaration, he activated a single magic. It was aimed at the point of contact between the barrier wall and the ocean waters. Basically, Artpe’s magic would be applied when the monsters tried to climb over the wall. It was the Hyper Rubbing spell. It had developed during the fight with the Demons, so it had reached an overpowering level of 49.

“Customer, did you just use that right now.... Mmmm?”

“There are two ways of activating the Hyper Rubbing. The first method is to rub against a target. The second method is to impart the power of rubbing on a target.”

In the past, he had rubbed the floor to make it slick. He had used the first method to do this. The second method was used when he imbued the power of rubbing onto the soap during the shower.

Of course, it was possible to combine the two methods. This was seen when he used his Mana String whip. However, the method he was using right now was the second method.

“The ocean water…… No, it’s the monsters!”

When he first learned Hyper Rubbing, all he could do was to rub his target in a vigorous manner. Even if he put in a lot of Mana into the spell, he couldn’t created a magic that could change one’s environment.

In the past, magicians thought about researching the Hyper Rubbing spell, but it was useless in practical life. No one dared to use it in battle. This was why most could raise it to level 20 on average. Level 30 was the highest someone had developed it before. Artpe had also thought that level 30 was the limit of Hyper Rubbing.

[Koo-goo-rooooooooooooo!]

[Kee-ahhhhhhhhhhk!]

However, he didn’t have any of the spells that had been available to him in his past life. He had no choice, but to rely on the Hyper Rubbing spell. In turn, he had found ways to use the magic spell in real battles, and it had widened his repertoire. He realized a truth about the world through this meaningless magic, but his biggest achievement was the growth of the Hyper Rubbing spell. It wouldn’t be an exaggeration if one called him the Emperor of Friction.

“T...the waves.... New waves that seems to be resisting against the waves of the oceans are forming!”

“The friction causes vibration. As I control the Mana, I can control the cycle and intensity of the vibration.”

The waves started small, but the waves kept adding to each other as the size of the waves grew larger. Artpe was raising the barrier wall as he controlled the vibration caused by the friction. He even controlled the waves that were forming as he grew the size of the waves.

[Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhk!]

[Kee-heeeeeek! Kyahhhhk!]

This was occurring everywhere the barrier wall was installed!

“Amazing…… You are too incredible, customer! Still, it would have been simpler if you used the magic spell that creates waves!”

“I don’t have it! I don’t have such magic!”

Artpe threw a tantrum as he created a bigger wave. Most of the weak monsters could not overcome the waves. They were pushed backwards. Even if monsters were strong enough to push past the waves, they couldn’t withstand the incredible amount of friction being created by the barrier wall. They were repelled.

In other words, Artpe was really defending the 1st tier barrier walls by himself.

“L...look over there.”

“Magician-nim has control over nature.”

“W...we shouldn’t be doing this right now ! While Magician-nim is buying us time, let us complete the 2nd tier barrier walls.!”

However, Artpe wasn’t done yet. He had somewhat recovered the magical energy he had expended when he placed the Hyper Rubbing spell on the entirety of the barrier wall. He once again placed his hand on the barrier wall.

“Customer, you should help me now to snipe the monsters.... What are you doing now?”

“Reinforcement.”

Artpe’s hand flashed, and a massive amount of Mana flowed out of him again. All of the Mana was put into the barrier wall. The barrier wall slowly started to vibrate more as it let out a purple light.

“Wait a moment. This isn’t an artifact. How are you going to use Reinforcement on a regular barrier wall....kyahhhhhhhhhhk!”

Mycenae had been doubting Artpe until the barrier wall started to shake. He easily took her by surprise again.

The 1st tier barrier walls were about to become obsolete, since the troop of mermen could easily overcome the low barrier walls. However, when the 1st tier barrier walls received Artpe's Mana, the wall evolved at a fundamental level. Of course, its sturdiness had increased, but it also increased in overall size!

“All right. I think I can use Reinforcement twice on the wall in one sitting.... I'm going again.!”

“Kyahhhhhhhhhhk!”

Another round of purple light burst forward, and in a flash, the barrier wall surged upwards! It was over 10 meters in height!

“Ohhhhhhhhhhh! Magician-nim breathed his magic into the barrier!”

“It grew! It is about the same size as the 2nd tier barrier walls! Oh my god! What is his level!”

[Vibrating wall infused with the will to protect Frate+2]

[This nameless and plain barrier wall had been touched by the hands of a magician. The records of the people, who had fought in the past Lunatic Waves, were absorbed. The wall was born again, and this process affected the power of the special spell that was placed on the barrier wall. It turned into a large artifact that can emit vibration.]

Artpe let out an embarrassed laughter when the artifact was born. He hadn't expected it to work.

“Ha ha ha. I've done it again.”

“Customer, you always cause trouble, but.... The scale of this is too big!”

Artpe didn't need to maintain his Hyper Rubbing any more. The barrier wall had been given the power of vibration, so it could

repel the weak monsters with waves by itself. Even if monsters could approach the wall, it could increase the intensity of its vibration to cause damage to the monsters. And to top it off, the barrier wall was too tall now. Monsters couldn't even attempt at jumping over the wall.

“Ah, the large troop of mermen are here.”

“You are right. They are coming.... They were a step too late.”

The troop of monster mermen had confident expressions on their face as if to say, ‘We’ll just climb over that low barrier wall!’

They had an exquisite timing in making their appearance. It made one want to ask them if they were the main characters of this story.

[Goo-rooo-roo..... Ooh-uhng?]

[High! It is high!]

They finally arrived at the 1st tier barrier walls. However, these weren't the human made walls that they had heard about from their mothers and fathers. They were baffled. The mermen froze as they came face to face with the massive barrier wall.

It was supposed to be a wall they could easily jump over.....

[Ggoo-uhhhhhhng! Wall! It hurts!]

[We can't cross it! The wall is insurmountable!]

[I want to go home!]

The troop of mermen and mermaids despaired at their twisted reality. Naturally, they took steps to avoid the reality. However, Artpe wouldn't let them do so. Mana Strings were emitted from the tip of his fingers. He no longer needed to maintain his Hyper Rubbing spell. He could slaughter them to his heart's content now!

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhk!]

[Keeeeeeek!]

“You aren’t even worth much EXP, yet you dare to come here! Come back with stronger monsters!”

“Mmmm…… It seems we no longer need the 2nd and 3rd tier barriers……”

Mycenae carefully observed her surrounding as she raised her ballista.

After two hours, the nobles from the other countries that had been occupied with the battle against the Demons came running towards the port. They despaired when they found no traces of their boats. They realized their ships had all sunk.

Even at that moment, not a single monster was able to cross the 1st tier barrier wall.

Chapter 59 - Lunatic Wave (5)

“Artpe!”

“Oppa!”

The moment Maetel neatly annihilated all the Demons she came running towards the port. In a flash, she used her amazing jumping ability to climb atop the vibrating wall. It took her a single leap, and when she arrived at the top, she clung to Artpe. As if Sienna didn't want to lose to Maetel, she tried to jump onto the wall, but her physical ability was inferior compared to Maetel. She had to push off once more midway up the wall.

“Artpe. You did this, right?”

“That's right.”

“It is really high up here!”

Maetel's Mana detection had always been exceptional, but it became much more sensitive as she traveled with Artpe.

She was like a hound that could smell anything that possessed Artpe's Mana. When she saw the unique wavelength of his Mana being emitted in droves from the barrier wall, she knew his hands had touched the wall.

[Keeeeeek! Come down here, humans!]

[L...listen to my song! Hear me sing!]

The more important fact right now was the fact that numerous monsters including mermen were unable to invade the territory of humans. This was thanks to the barrier wall being in the way.

Artpe and Mycenae were killing a massive amount of monsters, but the number of monsters present in the ocean was growing. It was said that the ocean was a treasure trove of life, and this phrase was being proven right by the massive number of monsters that was continually growing.

It made one wonder if there was an end to this monster rush.

“We are fine for now. We’ll be able to relax until the barrier walls falls. ”

“Ah. So that is why I saw people carrying out tasks all over the city instead of manning the wall.”

“I found it particularly reprehensible that they left everything to you..... If an outsider saw this, one would think you were Frate’s lord.”

The residents of Frate had many tasks to do if they wanted to face the Lunatic Wave. Food had to be put away as reserve. Then they had to close several roads that could be used by the monsters once they entered the city. More barriers had to be erected on the roads.

However, this year’s Lunatic Wave had arrived so suddenly that they would have had to endure it with nothing but their body. However, Artpe had executed an effective plan that had given all humans within the city some time. It had given the humans some breathing room. It was unintentional, but Artpe was carrying out tasks that befit a hero.

“Artpe is too kind.”

Maetel had no idea how a wall could continuously vibrate and make waves without an outside source of Mana. However, she understood that many people would be saved thanks to what Artpe had done. However, Artpe decisively shook his head from side to side.

“I’m not kind. I just want to smash all the plans hatched by the Demon King. Moreover, I want to kill all the monsters, so I can monopolize the rewards.”

“Hoo-hoo.”

Whenever he got embarrassed, he always uttered such silly things. Maetel found that part about him to be endearing. Maetel was having such thoughts to herself. Artpe snorted as he avoided

her gaze. As consequence, the blameless monsters were cut into pieces by the Mana Strings.

Instead of flirting with Artpe, Sienna had decided to kill the monsters. However, when she caught sight of the mermen, she tilted her head in confusion. She asked Artpe a question.

“Oppa, they look like humans. They aren’t humans?”

“Mmm…… I guess this is a good opportunity to give you this explanation.”

The mermen had pushed through the wave to approached the barrier wall. However, they couldn’t do anything, because of the vibration caused by the wall. Unlike the dog-headed Gnolls, the mermen had the ability to adapt. They gave up on trying to climb over the wall, and they focused on directly attacking the humans on top of the wall.

Their upper body looked human above the surface of the water, and their lower body was under the surface of the water. It made it very difficult to differentiate them from humans.

“In the case where monsters look like humans, it is mostly a ploy to take the humans off their guard. Since they look like humans, it causes humans to have a sense of kinship with these types of monsters. It drops the guard of the humans. These types of monsters use this weakness to attack their opponents.”

“Yes, I see. Is that how it is?”

Maetel was a cruel hero. When she determined her opponents were bad guys, it didn’t matter if her opponents were humans or non-humans. She ruthlessly cut them down. She tilted her head as she asked a question. Artpe brushed off her words as he continued to speak.

“There is nothing strange about monsters resembling humans. The dominant race of this land are humans. The important thing isn’t the appearance of the monsters. It is more about our mental

attitude towards the monsters.”

“Artpe, that shouldn’t be a problem for us, right?”

Maetel once again let out a bright smile as she butted into the conversation.

“When they do bad things, we kill them. However, that doesn’t mean all monsters do bad things!”

“……yes, that’s right.”

She got half of the answer right. Despite this fact, Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he nodded his head. He acknowledged her answer. For Maetel and Sienna, the depth of this answer was sufficient. The rest could be taken care of by Artpe.

‘It would be great if good and evil can be determined in such a simple manner... The problem arises from the fact that not all monsters are evil. There are monsters that have developed their intelligence, so they have the self-control needed to suppress the urge to harm other creatures. Sometimes it is hard to determine the line between monsters and other foreign races. This problem comes up for discussion sometimes between humans and even the Demon race... Tsk. I can think about this later.’

Artpe retracted such thoughts as he raised his head. Many mermen had thrown their body against the vibrating wall early on, so their body was dyed with their blue-colored blood. All their eyes had turned red, and they were throwing spears towards Artpe and Maetel. It seems these mermen were unable to control their base instincts.

There were many individual differences between Mermen. They were similar in that facet as the humans! However, none of them should have been affected by the Lunatic Wave. So they didn’t have to think too hard before acting against the mermen!

“That is why we can just kill them all.”

“Yes. Understood, oppa!”

Sienna let out a bright smile as she extended both her hands. She possessed a special Mana that was unique to her. She was the only person on this world, who possess it. Her Mana flowed through her body, and it gathered at her fingertips.

“Divine Punishment!”

She couldn't jump into the ocean to wage an underwater warfare. This was why she chose to use the attack magic of a priestess! She possessed a high rank class of Warrior Priestess, yet she hadn't been able to learn much specialized skills of her Class. However, she had learned a simple spell where she could smite her enemies by gathering her holy power.

“Divine Punishment! Divine Punishment! Divine Punishment!”

Normally, this attack magic was used to keep others in check. However, Sienna was able to overlap this weak attack magic multiple times to expand its power and area of effect. She was able to come up with a powerful magic on the spot, and the attack struck the ocean.

It was the same concept of waves adding to other waves to create an enormous wave. She combined several attack magic into one. She was able to cause meaningful damage to her targets!

[Kee-ahhhhhk!]

[It hurts! I want to go home!]

[Koo-hahk!]

Sienna's overpowering magical energy washed was the ocean, and it inflicted stun effects to the monsters. If one didn't know she was a Warrior Priestess, one would mistake her for a magician.

“She really does have talent for magic.... Huh?”

Artpe was lamenting the fact that Sienna had been unable to traverse the road suited for her when he felt someone tugging at his sleeve. He turned to look behind him. It was none other than

Maetel. Her cheeks were puffed out.

“Artpe, what should I do? There are too many monsters to target each of them with my long sword!”

“You can’t do anything here. You should make preparations. I’m sure the higher ranked monsters will show up later. You should eat and recover your stamina.”

“I’m not hungry yet!”

“Over here!”

“Everyone gather over here! The inner wall isn’t vibrating. Place the ladder here!”

Maetel was sulking in a major way as she stamped her feet. At that moment, humans were climbing ladders to climb up the 1st tier barrier wall. The number of humans on top of the wall was steadily growing. These were foreign nobles, merchants and knights. They had just finished lamenting the fact that their boats had sunk to the bottom of the sea. Afterwards, they had had come to the barrier wall with their fighting equipments.

Even if they were foreigners, they couldn’t ignore the danger being face by Frate!

“I’ll help in the defense, magician-nim!”

“Magician, thanks to you this city...no, this country was saved. From now on, I will help you with everything I got!”

“.....could you point out which son of a.... Could you point out which monster sunk our ships?”

Artpe put on a suitable business smile as he assigned them to various parts of the wall.

Maetel finally came to a big decision as she raised her head.

“I understand now..”

“You should go there.... I told you I don’t know which one did it.

Salvage? You should ask your own country about that.... Huh? What did you just say, Maetel?”

“It’s been my dream of mine to enter into the ocean!”

She had suddenly made an offbeat announcement, Artpe was going to laugh it off. However, Maetel didn’t give him the chance to reply to her words. She took couple short breaths before jumping off the barrier wall.

“Ee-yahhhhhhhhhhhhhhp!”

She didn’t jump towards the inner part of the wall. She jumped outwards where it was teeming with hundreds of thousands of monsters! She jumped towards the location crowded by an overwhelming number of monsters.

“Oooh-ahhhhhhhh, Maetel!”

“Huhk! The berserker jumped into the ocean!”

“As expected of the berserker...! I’m sure of it. She is trying to just end her life through this fight!”

“I’m pretty sure she lost to the priestess in the quarrel for the magician's love.”

Crazy nonsense were being spouted by the people around him. Artpe wondered if he should drop them all into the ocean, but he decided it wasn’t time to do that.

“Maetel, you idiot! Come back up here right now! If you had an artifact that allowed you to walk on water, you might.....”

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhp!”

As always, Maetel extinguished Artpe’s worries. When she was about to hit the surface of the water, she took a violent swing with her long sword. Three mermen were cut open, and she used the recoil of the attack to jump once again into the air!

“Eh-eet, hahp!”

[Koo-ahk!]

[Kyahhhhhhk!]

It would have been disappointing if it had ended with a single attack. However, Maetel once again swung her sword right before she fell in a different location. This times she cut open four monsters.

She kept repeating it again, again and again!

“Uh…….”

He had been about to use his Mana String to fish her out, but Artpe froze halfway in an awkward position. She said it had been her dream to enter into the ocean, yet there wasn't a single drop of water on Maetel's body. It was as if she was playing on dry ground. She was hopping across the water!

“That is…… Uh…….”

“Customer, what am I supposed to say when you look at me as if to say ‘how is that possible?’…….”

“Unni is amazing…….”

The fact that she was able to move around lightly without feeling the weight of her armor was the norm for her.

However, she currently had to take into account of the location of the monsters, their resistance to her attacks, the power of her swings, the recoil of her attacks hitting the surface of the water……. The fact that she was able to calculate all of that factors before moving…….

“……you want to try that, Alfred?”

“I'm sorry, lord. I'll die if I try that.”

Artpe had wondered if other knights had Skills that would allow them to jump into the ocean. Fortunately, no swordsman or warrior was able to do so. Everyone was absentmindedly watching Maetel go ham on top of the ocean.

“Yes, it is as expected. She’s the one that is strange. It is only her.”

“This scene is worthy of being recorded in the history books. However, it does look unsightly!”

It really would have been a interesting sight if around 100 knights jumped into the ocean by following Maetel’s example. He was a bit disappointed that he wouldn’t be able to see it, but he tamped down on such thoughts.

At that moment, he saw an enormous shadow appear in the distant ocean.

“Mmmm…….”

He felt an atmosphere that could only be felt when the final boss came out. Artpe hoped it wasn’t the case, but when the enormous shadow entered into the range of his Read All Creation ability, his hope was dashed into pieces.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

“My goodness. This is nuts.”

“What’s wrong, customer? If we can hold out like this for several days, everything will be fine…….”

Artpe let out a bright laughter as he answered Mycenae’s question.

“The Kraken has surfaced.”

“……customer, you are really good at making a joke.”

If she really thought he was joking, she wouldn't have put away her ballista. She was getting ready to run away. If it was Artpe’s words, Mycenae always trusted it to be true before asking any questions. It was a somewhat praiseworthy and cute.

“Where are you going?”

“Let me go!”

However, that was a separate issue. He wouldn't let her run away. Mycenae had quickly packed her items. However, he firmly gripped her shoulder when she turned away.

“Mycenae. Since, we've come this far together, let us meet our end together.”

“You only say my name in an attentive manner in situations like this! Let me go! I have to live!”

“If you run away to the city, I'm sure there are Demons waiting for you.”

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhh! Customer, you are bad! You are a bad guy!”

Mycenae let out a cry. In the next moment, it was as if the monster was responding to her. A enormous tentacle appeared in the distant ocean.

The boss wave had begun.

Chapter 60 - Kraken (1)

Kraken.

It was a monster that existed since the distant past. It was a large monster of the ocean. Over the numerous years, it had eaten its competitors to grow in size. It had the combination of overwhelming size and massive amount of magical energy. It was a calamitous monster. Sailors, who lived their entire life on the ocean, couldn't even catch sight of its shadow. Still, when it did show up, it destroyed everything and everyone in the region. This was why no one knew if it was a squid, an octopus or a crustacean. Still, this monster appeared frequently in legends.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

[Oooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

Moreover, this Kraken had shown itself in the ocean in front of Frate. It was still very far away, so Artpe could discern only two facts. The first fact was its level, and the second fact was that the Kraken was a squid.

“It has impeccable timing!”

“Oppa, is that edible?”

“Nope. However, we usually eat their kind.”

The humans had been about to coalesce into a unified front in an effort to face the monsters. It was supposed to be a tale of brotherhood and bravery amongst the humans. However, the final boss had shown up at that moment!

“There is no doubt about it! It's the real Kraken!”

“Its legs are incredible big!”

“C...can it be?”

“Kraken!? It really is that dreadful being!”

The current situation was so unfair that it verged on being immoral. It wasn't the case where a final boss made an appearance to scare its opponents. It had locked in on Frate as its target, and it was making a beeline from the deep sea to the coast!

[Kee-heeeeeeee!]

[It's here! That bastard is here!]

Humans weren't the only ones to shake from fear in the presence of the Kraken. The sea monsters had lost their mind as they coveted the inland, but they felt fear when they realized the Kraken was approaching them.

[We follow its words. Obey!]

[If we don't listen to it, we'll die. We'll all die.]

This was especially true for the mermen and mermaids. They spouted some nonsense about obeying the Kraken. It seemed there was a clear hierarchy between the Krakens and the mermen.

It was extremely rare for a monster of Kraken's caliber to appear in a Lunatic Wave. It seemed this Kraken was aggressive as it ruled over the mermen of this region. It seemed the Kraken was the leading this Lunatic Wave!

“Why did it have to show up this year!”

“Customer, let me go! Please!”

“No way. If we are going to stay alive, we do it together. If there are going to be any deaths, you will die alone.”

“Isn't that a roundabout way of saying you'll throw me out as bait, while you guys run away! I'm right, aren't I? Let me go!”

Mycenae was on the verge of tears as she fell to the floor.

In truth, she was well aware of the current situation. Once she decided not to run away, she couldn't escape the clutches of the

Kraken.

Moreover, there was a record of her entering Frate. If she left solely on the basis that the city was a dangerous place to be, a huge crack would form in her qualification as a merchant. She would have thrown away her wares and customers in pursuit of her own safety. Even if she was able to survive through running away, it would be tough for her to be a merchant in the future.

“On the other hand, if you survive this, it might count as an Achievement.”

“Achievement……?”

Artpe’s words stopped Mycenae’s tears. A thought came to her when she heard his words.

“When you say Achievement…… Are you perhaps……”

“When one is trying to gain a high rank Class, this requirement is more important than one’s level.”

“I have to put my life on the line if I want to move forward?”

“It is up to you to make the choice.”

He didn’t know how she felt about being a merchant. Since she was a Dark Elf, he was sure there was some backstory as to why she became one. On the other hand, she wouldn’t be able to drop the Class easily. This was true even if her life was in danger.

“……how? Is there a method that’ll allow us to win against such a powerful monster?”

In the end, she put strength into her two legs to stand up, and she carefully posed the question to Artpe. He let out a sigh as he gave an answer.

“I’m working through that problem right now.”

Obviously, the humans in this place were of no help. The highest level amongst them was lower in level than Sienna. None of them could last a second against the Kraken. Moreover, there were only

a very select number of people that could use magic. Artpe and the Dungeon Merchants were the only ones that could use magic.

“If the Kraken hits this barrier wall with its full strength, it’ll eventually fall.”

“Barrier wall.... Reinforcement... That’s right! Wait a moment, customer!”

It seemed Mycenae had come up with an idea. She desperately clung to him as she asked him a question.

“Customer, didn’t you say you could duplicate the effects of Reinforcements if you had Magic Stones?”

“I was talking about small items like my boots. If I want to further Reinforce such a large barrier wall, the amount of Magic Stones I would need.....”

Artpe stopped mid-speech. Mycenae was looking straight at him with incandescent eyes. This was the first time he had seen such sincere eyes since she had talked about the Eternal Forest with her Soul Contract in hand.

“Is it possible, customer?”

Was that the reason?

Artpe acted out of character by talking somewhat seriously towards her.

“.....according to my calculations, the Kraken won’t be able to destroy or cross the barrier if I Reinforce it twice more.”

“Is it really possible for you to calculate the amount of Magic Stones you need?”

“I would need around 500 Magic Stones that is over level 200. It doesn’t matter what properties they possess. It just has to be a high rank Magic Stones that is over level 200.”

Magic Stones were rare drops from monsters. It was a crystallization of pure Mana.

Each Magic Stone possessed different properties, and since it was the purest form of Mana, it was often used as supplementary ingredients for artifacts. Of course, it was traded at high prices. As the level of monster it had dropped from increased, the price also increased precipitously.

Moreover, if one was talking about 500 Magic Stones that only dropped from level 200 monster and above.....

“We could have bought every item put up for auction with that amount.”

“Even if we empty all of Diaz, I question as to whether that much Magic Stones could be found.”

“It’ll show up. I’m sure it’ll show up.”

Mycenae spoke with strong conviction behind her words.

“Money can even summon ghosts.”

“You.....”

“I need to go and negotiate, customer. Please wait a moment. I’ll be sure to bring all 500 of them.”

Mycenae immediately turned around as she jumped off the barrier wall. However, it wasn’t the sight of someone trying to run away. The sight of her retreating figure was something that could be seen only with a person that had put their life on the line.

“She’s only an ajumma, yet she is trying to act cool.....”

However, at that moment, he was sure of one thing. If they were able survive today’s ordeal safely, Mycenae would be able to advance to the high rank Merchant Class.

‘Yes, if we are able to survive today.....’

The humans were running about in confusion at the appearance of the Kraken. Alongside the humans, the monsters were plunged into a state of confusion too. They were acting as if the world was ending today. As expected, the irresistible urge to run away

tempted everyone.

At that moment, Maetel realized that the Kraken had made its appearance, so she hopped across the surface of the water. She returned to Artpe's side.

“Artpe, what should we do to catch that thing?”

“If we make the ocean boil, wouldn't it cook completely on its own?”

“Wa-ah. I bet that'll be delicious!”

Maetel let out an innocent laugh at Artpe's joke. In the next moment, her lily-white hand pinched Artpe's cheek. Even in the corner of her smile, there was a small piece of rage that was infused within it. It was a rage that was suited for a Berserker.

“Ah-ya-ya.”

“I'm being serious right now. Artpe?”

“I'm being serious too. It would be great if someone would make the ocean boil.”

“How can there be a person in this world that can make the ocean boil!”

There weren't any humans that could do it, but there were Demons that could pull it off. Artpe let out a sigh as he kept that answer to himself.

If Etna stepped forward to use her magic, she could solve this easily with one attack. However, she was under the Demon King's shackles, so she couldn't get directly involved in this matter. He frowned as he thought the world was really fucked up. Artpe spoke towards Maetel.

“I trust Artpe, but I also know that there are things that are impossible to accomplish in this world. Artpe, that is why.....”

Maetel whispered in a small voice. It was small enough that Artpe and Sienna was the only ones that could hear her words.

“You have to tell me if we have no chance of winning. I’ll run away with Artpe and Sienna in tow.”

“You’ll leave everyone to their certain death?”

“The fact that people will die makes me sad, but if Artpe dies, my world loses meaning. Artpe is the one that taught me to choose what is more important to me.”

It seems she received unnecessary specialized education from him!

Artpe clicked his tongue as he flicked her forehead.

“I can’t win against it, but I can make it retreat. So don’t even think about running away.”

“Yes, I’ll put my trust in you. Just tell me what I have to do, Artpe.”

“Oppa, I’m ready too!”

Maetel and Sienna had killed Demons in the auction house earlier, and their levels had risen thanks to it. Maetel was level 195, and Sienna’s level rose to 174.

If a little bit more time had been given to them, they would have easily broken through level 200. This was to be expected of Maetel, but Sienna had also gone through an explosive growth. It was thanks to her power to dominate and kill strong enemies.

However, this didn’t mean they weren’t in danger.

“Since this is an absurdly dangerous task, a single mistake could kill you.”

“What do I have to do?”

“You have delay the Kraken as much as possible. You have to delay him as much as possible. You have to hit it with meaningful attacks to attract its attention, and you have to decrease its speed.”

“.....”

She knew it was a possibility, but once he gave the order for a direct assault, Maetel turned absentminded for a brief moment. She turned her gaze towards the ocean. The Kraken was still a long ways away, but it was charging towards them at terrifying speed. The sight of the Kraken filled her eyes.

She replied with a vacant voice.

“That guy……?”

“Yes. In this place, you are the only one that can pull this off.”

Maetel had a high rank ability called Acceleration. The only one that could match the reaction speed of the vicious Kraken was Maetel with her Acceleration skill activated. Maetel was a genius where she could move on instinct. He confirmed this fact when she moved across the ocean.

“Let’s link our Mana. It’ll allow you to use Acceleration to your heart’s content. It’ll allow you to stall for enough time.”

“……I understand.”

Artpe had told her to stall for time against a level 267 large monster, and she accepted his request. Both of them were already halfway crazy. However, the most crazy thing here was the situation they found themselves in.

“I’ll give it a try. I’ll go right now.”

“The most important thing here is your life, Maetel.”

Artpe took off Maetel’s battle boots, and he put his black leather boots on her feet. When the artifact accepted the will of its owner, it shrunk in size to fit Maetel’s feet.

“If it gets too dangerous, I want you to run away immediately . At that point, I’ll abandon this place.”

“Ah-oooooh.”

He told her the instructions on how to use the boots. Unfortunately, none of Artpe’s words were reaching Maetel at this

point.

“I...is this heaven? Ah-ooh! Heaven!”

Artpe’s actions had broken through the the threshold of Maetel’s happy meter. He had placed her in heaven. When she didn’t move, Artpe tapped her shoulder.

“Maetel? Hey!”

“.....haht. Yes! I can do any tasks you ask of me now!”

“Are you all right.....?”

“I’m completely fine! It feels like I’m walking in heaven!”

“You don’t seem all right at all!?”

Maetel was facing Artpe, and her face was glowing. If the Kraken tried to take the boots off of her, she would probably use her superhuman strength to rip the Kraken into pieces. Artpe became worried. He was unable to pinpoint what he was worried about. Maetel left him behind as she quickly turned her body towards the ocean.

“I’ll go right now! Artpe? Do you mind if I kill it?”

When he heard her words, his worry started to spike uncontrollably!

“No. Don’t kill it. Run away! I told you to run away!”

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhhhp!”

Maetel’s energy had been fully charged. She didn’t listen to Artpe’s words as she jumped towards the ocean. She didn’t bother killing any monsters. She charged forward as she used either the head of the monsters or the head of the spears as stepping stones! She was charging with such ferocity that it made one wonder if she would really just kill the Kraken.

‘However, there is always a gap between reality and ideals.....’

The fact that heroes overcame all impossible situations was

something that was only possible in old stories.

If one wanted to turn the impossible into possible, one had to turn one's eyes away from one's ideals to face the uncomfortable reality.

He turned around with a hardened expression on his face. He faced the other girl, who was waiting for her orders.

“Just tell me what to do, oppa!”

“Sienna.”

“Yes!”

Sienna spoke with a dependable voice. If he asked her for the stars in the night skies, she would have gotten them for him. It was probably safer for her if he had asked her for the stars. Instead, he asked her to do a task that was much more dangerous.

“.....actually, you'll have to face someone that is more dangerous than Maetel's opponent.”

“Huh? There is a more dangerous opponent here than the squid?”

“She isn't our enemy right now, but that's right.”

In truth, Artpe had told Mycenae a single lie.

He would need to consume 500 Magic Stones from monsters over level 200 if he wanted to Reinforce the barrier wall twice. He told the truth up until that point.

However, the two additional Reinforcement had no chance of holding off the Kraken. He needed to Reinforce it one more time. Moreover, he had to Reinforce the barrier wall with a property that was completely opposite of the Kraken. Artpe would have to execute the world's strongest and splendid Reinforcement.

The supplementary ingredient needed for this Reinforcement was simple.

“I want you to take this letter to Jaime’s Inn located in C Sector.”

“Jaime’s Inn located in C sector.....”

Sienna repeated his words as she took letter he had written during the few minute break. Then he spoke with a desolate smile on his face.

“You will find a woman waiting there for me. Tell her that I want to hold her hand once.”

The third supplementary ingredient for the Reinforcement was none other than the magical energy of the Fire Witch Etna.

Chapter 61 - Kraken (2)

“Magician-nim!”

After he sent off the two girls to different locations, it didn't take too long for Artpe to be surrounded by numerous people. They came in waves. The inner city should be safer than the top of the wall, yet people were convinced that the safest place was near Artpe.

“Magician-nim, please look at the Kraken!”

“Do something! I beg of you! We don't have the power to do anything against the Kraken, magician-nim!”

“Magician-niiiiiiiiim!”

When he saw the people blindly cling to him, he thought about what happened one year ago in the mountain village. At that time, they begged for his help. They had looked at him with desperate eyes.

They didn't care what price Artpe and Maetel would have to pay in order to help them. Even if they knew it, they had acted as if they were ignorant of that fact. Since the two of them had the power, the people had acted as if it was a given that Maetel and Artpe would have to help them..

“Stop sticking so close to me. Get off of me.”

Artpe dislodged them using his cold voice, and he extended a finger. He pointed towards the location where the 3rd barrier wall was being erected. The lord of Frate was standing near it, and it looked as if his soul had been sucked out by the appearance of the Kraken. One could also see the Dungeon merchant Mycenae, who was trying to hold the lord's attention as she gave a desperate speech.

“Even if you guys pool all your powers together, you won't be able to do anything against the Kraken. It is the same for me. I

have no chance of mixing it up with the Kraken with my bare body. If you want to survive, you have two choices. You can try to avoid the Kraken coming ashore by running away towards the mountainous regions. Or you can give that merchant what she needs.”

“However, that merchant is spouting nonsense! We are in a dangerous situation, yet she is trying to make profit off of the trade.....”

The man went into a lengthy speech.

However, the argument could be simplified into this.

Level 200 Magic Stones were items in high demand, yet the supply was extremely limited. This was why many sellers of Magic Stones colluded with each other to fix the price. However, their rivals were present here, so it would be impossible to fix the price.

“So what price will you be satisfied with?”

“Money isn’t important! We are talking about my family’s Magic Stones. It isn’t something that should be sold in bulk. I have to find the proper owner.....”

“How much?”

“I...I would have to receive 15 thousand gold each.....”

“.....what?”

It was idiotic to boost the price of an item that was hard to trade. However, Artpe was sure of one thing. There was no way a level 200 Magic Stone was worth over 5,000 gold.

Mycenae told him she would take care of everything with money. However, she probably never expected the nobles to act like this. Even Artpe thought it was ridiculous.

“I’m the one who asked her to acquire the Magic Stones. You all probably know this, but it is impossible to fight off the Kraken with the power gathered within this city. The best way to stop its

charge is through the barrier wall. However, a barrier of this caliber can't withstand the Kraken. I have to Reinforce it using a lot of high rank Magic Stones. If not, this city and the people within it will be smashed into pieces."

"Still, you are talking about 500 Magic Stones....."

"That is why you aren't cursing out the merchant. You are bad mouthing me. Well, let me ask you this. Am I the one trying to profit from this dangerous situation? Or is it you guys? "

Artpe's gaze was bottomless. It was hard to thinking of him as a 14 year old. He was oozing with charisma, and it prevented the people from arguing with him. They shut their mouths. This was an ability that existed only in true heroes. Artpe was really annoyed right now, so he didn't realize this fact.

"But....."

"Koo-hmmm. Kmm, kmmm...."

Despite his words, they refused to open their mouths in the end.

Some wondered if the magician was lying to screw over the foreigners. Others wondered if Reinforcing the barrier wall was really the only way out of this. There were countless excuses running through their heads, and Artpe could clearly see through all of them. He wasn't using his Read All Creation ability. In the past, he had countless encounters with such people, so his prior experience let him know what they were thinking.

A bitter smile appeared automatically on his lips.

"Hoo-ooh.... Humans really the same whenever or wherever you encounter them."

"But magician-nim....."

"Fuck off. Get out of my sight."

If he acted on his emotions, he would have thrown the lot of them into the ocean. However, Mycenae asked him to leave it all to

her. He wouldn't step forward until she asked for his help.

Artpe turned his head away. These humans refused to give anything, yet they still expected protection from Artpe. He looked at the battle that was occurring on the ocean.

It was said one should be thankful for small mercies. After the Kraken had made its appearance, the other monsters became timid. There were monsters that were barely able to move in the presence of the Kraken. Even as the humans were running about in confusion, no monsters were able to cross the vibrating wall.

“Maetel.....”

After he finished assessing the situation, his eyes naturally turned towards her.

Maetel was speeding across the ocean. She was quickly approaching the Kraken. Once Maetel decided to do something, she showed no hesitation or fear.

If she wasn't a hero, no one was qualified to be a hero. Even though he was still in a dangerous situation, he chuckled.

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhng!]

Kraken let out a roar. The wave containing its Mana spread across the ocean, and it attracted more and more monsters to the shores of Frate.

A portion of the monsters were swept up by the Kraken's tentacles, and they were eaten. The rest followed behind it.

It seemed the Kraken wasn't planning on dragging this out. It was filled with the will of wanting to end this quickly.

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhp!”

At that moment, Maetel bravely got in its way. While she kept the momentum of speeding across the ocean surface, she put her magical energy into her long sword. She shot out a beam of energy!

She decided to take this approach, because she came to the

conclusion that she would bounce off the Kraken if she attacked head-on.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhh!]

She was a hero approaching level 200, so her strike was effective against the Kraken. She had worried the Kraken would just shrug off her attack. She had worried it would continue to charge forward. Fortunately, it stopped moving when it received Maetel's attack!

“Not yet! Stay there!”

[Koo-ahhhhhhng!]

The Kraken was pissed off. It swung its house-sized tentacle towards Maetel. However, Maetel followed Artpe's advice as she used her Acceleration skill to avoid its attack. Then she used her beam again!

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

The energy construct was emitted from the tip of the long sword, and it traveled in a straight line. It split open the forehead of the Kraken as dark blood started to flow.

Everyone had given up when they saw the overwhelming size of the Kraken. However, the people of Frate let out a cheer when Maetel's attack wounded the Kraken.

Artpe coldly assessed the damage, and he shook his head from side to side.

“The damage is akin to being pricked on the finger with fish bone.”

“You speak in such hopeful terms.”

He had spoken those words to himself. He hadn't wanted anyone else to hear it, yet someone replied to his words. Artpe let out a sigh. An out of breath woman had just climbed up to the wall. He raised his hand towards Mycenae as he asked a question.

“Did you gather all 500?”

“Not yet. I’ve gathered around 180. I contacted the Anywhere company’s headquarters, and the outcome was positive. Moreover, I was able to receive support from the Diaz kingdom’s nobles. However, it was as you’ve said. The problem came from.....”

“There is a limit to the supply of Magic Stones that could be gathered in Diaz. I knew this would happen. In the first place, the appearance of monsters over level 200 is very low here.”

Still, the nobles and the merchants from foreign countries that could make up the insufficient supplies were also gathered here. Artpe took the pouch containing the 180 Magic Stones. It was unfortunate, but it might still be possible to accomplish the 1st Reinforcement.

“So what are you going to do? These pigs are refusing to sell their Magic Stones.”

“No, they will sell it to us.”

There was still a bright light twinkling within her eyes. Her eyes swept over the nobles and merchants gathered atop the barrier wall. She just noticed that most of them were from foreign countries. It seemed the greedy ones had sharp eyes for assessing the situation. They decided not to hide in the city. They were on the front line, yet they decided they were safest near the strongest being within Frate.

“Everyone. Please I beg of you once again. The communication magic and the item summoning magic will be provided by the headquarters of the Anywhere company. We promise to help you out in gathering the items. We are willing to buy the Magic Stones of level 200 monsters for 6,000 gold. You aren’t selling it for a loss.”

“Who are you to demand this of me! I can’t sell it at that price. It will drop my family’s name into the mud!”

“Six thousand gold? Ha! If the participants of the last Magic Stone auction within the capital heard of that price, they would have all mocked you! Fifteen thousand gold! There is no way I can go under fifteen thousand gold!”

Fifteen thousand gold.

It seemed this was the highest price the Magic Stones had sold in their country. He couldn't believe how foolish these people were. Artpe was looking around the crowd when he had a realization. The ones asking for a high price for the Magic Stones were part of the leadership group that represented each country's trade administration. The nobles and the merchants knew their future were up in the air right now, but even if they wanted to make the sale, they were afraid of crossing these important figures. They couldn't easily step out of line.

“Hoo. I see. Is everyone of the same opinion?”

“So you want us to take all the loss?”

Even if they had ideas of selling the Magic Stones for less than 15 thousand gold, they couldn't do so if some were able to sell it for the price of 15 thousand gold. Greed would naturally rise from within them. That was why all the humans gathered here planned on sticking together. They planned on insisting on the price of 15 thousand gold.

Even the Anywhere company would go bankrupt if they bought 320 Magic Stones for the price of 15 thousand gold. Mycenae no longer tried to convince the nobles and the merchants. She looked straight at Artpe as she spoke.

“Artpe-nim.”

“What?”

Until now, she had always referred to him as customer. He had no idea what changed her mind, but he willingly went along with her request.

“It seems their argument hinges on the fact that they don’t believe the barrier wall could be Reinforced again. If you show them the evidence, they might take my words a little bit more seriously.”

“Do you really believe that? Even if I use Reinforcement in front of their eyes, it looks as if they’ll come up with a different excuse.”

“I’ll deal with it somehow once we reach that point.”

“Ha!”

Good.

She was showing a backbone that befits a hero’s exclusive merchant.

Artpe didn’t reply to her words. He just grinned as he threw the pouch containing the Magic Stones into the air. The string on the pouch loosened, and the 180 Magic Stones letting out prismatic radiance scattered into the air.

“W...what the hell!”

“Each of them are treasures worth over several thousand gold.....!”

“M...magician-nim! What are you trying to do......”

“Watch this well. You won’t be able to act ignorant after this.”

Artpe placed one hand on the barrier wall. The scattered Magic Stones landed all over the barrier wall, and he activated his Reinforcement skill.

“W...wait a moment.”

“It really.....?”

In a flash, the barrier wall let out a brilliant purple light as the wall started to vibrate. The 180 Magic Stones started to turn into pure magical energy in ones and twos. They were being absorbed into the barrier wall!

“Hoo-ooh…….”

“Wait a moment.”

The purple light swallowed all the Magic Stones, and for a brief moment, silence blanketed the surrounding. The people on the wall were dumbfounded. They had just witnessed Magic Stones worth several hundred thousand gold disappear in a flash. It happened when they were about to speak.

“Magician-nim, what are youuuuuuu-uuhhhhhhhhh?!”

“Ggoo-ahhhhhhhhhhk!”

All the light was absorbed into the barrier wall, and it shot up several dozen meters!

“Be careful! Don’t fall over the wall!”

“T...the port is being destroyed! Everyone grab onto the barrier wall!”

“My god.... Even the corpses of the monsters.....”

In the process of Reinforcing the barrier wall, the wall absorbed everything it was lacking from its surrounding. It absorbed the Records of its surrounding to expand its size. It hardened and consolidated the change, and a much stronger power of vibration emanated from the wall.

It resulted in forming an overpowering barrier wall. The 2nd and 3rd tier barrier walls couldn’t hold a candle to this one. Originally, the barrier wall was simply made out of stone. However, after it went through three Reinforcements, the wall was infused with a black purple light. There was a metallic sheen to the wall. It displayed its dignified presence.

[Frate’s Guardian Wall+3]

[Owner : Artpe]

[The desire of the people wanting to protect the country and city was consolidated through the power of the great magician. A

jumbo artifact was created by him. Most monsters will be unable to approach the wall thanks to the the powerful vibration emitted by the wall. If the owner desired it, the wall can decrease in size to increase its strength.]

“My god.”

“T...the barrier wall did get higher....”

“The Magic Stones... All those Magic Stones are gone. It seems the merchant wasn’t lying!”

Of course, the power of the Reinforcement skill was amazing. Still, Artpe never expected to be given the ownership of the wall!

Still, he felt tears coming to his eyes when he thought about the amount of Magic Stones he had to consume to accomplish this!

“It’s high.”

“The monsters clamoring below look like trash from up here.....”

Not even the mermen....no, even the Mer-King would be unable to approach a barrier of this caliber. The past Lunatic Waves would have had to pack up and retreat if they had to face this barrier wall.

However, even this barrier wall could only last 5 minutes against the Kraken.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhng!]

“No! You can’t come this way!”

Maetel was still holding out against the Kraken. However, the Kraken refused to stop its charge as it dealt with Maetel. The distance between the Kraken and Frate was contracting. If it wasn’t for Maetel, the Kraken would have already reached inland.

“You saw it, right! If he Reinforces it one more time, he can stop the Kraken! We aren't forcefully taking your Magic Stones away for you! We are paying a fair price for them! Your Magic Stones can

save your own lives! It can save this city, country and even the continent!”

“Koo-hmm. However, there is no guarantee he’ll be able to succeed in replicating this effect again....”

“Magician-nim, it isn’t as if I don’t trust you..... It is hard to believe that such a vast amount of Magic Stones were consumed.”

“Even if the wall becomes sturdier, can it really hold off the Kraken?”

Mycenae grinded her teeth. Even in such a situation, the humans were trying to find a way to weasel out of everything. They were being threatened with death, yet these dim-witted people were unable to let go of their possessions!

“This auction has already been a bust! Still, you can think of it as your money saving your own lives! It isn’t a situation where even one of us should be backing off! How long are you all going to take a back seat!”

“The ship I took to get here was sunk. I’ve already taken a massive financial hit. That’s right Sir Frantz hasn’t taken any losses yet. I also heard that his family has a pretty good amount of Magic Stones.....”

“Ah, it isn’t like that. I don’t possess any of them. The head of the family has it firmly within his grasp, so I don’t possess the authority to...”

The nobles had nowhere to run anymore, so they started selling each other out. If 320 Magic Stones were gathered, the rest of them would be off the hook from selling their Magic Stones. Each of them struggled desperately to be in the latter group. It was hard to listen to their words.

“.....I now know all your intentions. I’ll give up on purchasing the Magic Stones.”

Mycenae was cold and firm with her words. It stopped the

bickering between the nobles and the merchants. When a brief silence descended, Mycenae took couple breathes before she raised her head. The light in her eyes was terrifying.

However, she didn't look at the other people gathered atop the wall. She looked straight at Artpe as she asked a question.

“Artpe-nim. I will be sure to give you the money later with interest. Do you have any interest in selling your product?”

“What product?”

If an answer akin to a soul came out of her mouth, it would have horrified everyone. However, she spoke the name of a more terrifying product.

“I'm talking about this barrier wall. In truth, I spoke to the lord of Frate before coming here. I've confirmed with him that he decided to give the ownership of this barrier wall to Artpe-nim.”

“.....ho-oh.”

A single strand of smile appeared on Artpe's lips when he heard her words. He now knew Mycenae and the lord of Frate had come up with this ploy. They had guessed things might turn out like this with the nobles and the merchants. It seemed things were rolling along as she planned!

“What price do you think I should ask for it?”

“Whatever you want.”

“I like how you think.”

Everyone could only watch as the negotiation continued between Artpe and Mycenae. They didn't even have to ask to know what would happen in the future.

“All right. I'll sell you this wall. I'm assuming the Reinforcement fee will be given separately?”

“If I do agree to pay that price, will you help punish those that infringe upon my private property rights?”

“Private property rights. I like that word.”

Artpe and Mycenae looked at each other as they smiled.

The nobles and the merchants finally realized that they had no choice from the start.

Chapter 62 - Kraken (3)

“I...I’ll sell it for 6,000 gold.”

“Yes, I’ll sell it too. You cheap and dirty....!”

The nobles and merchants finally changed their attitudes when they became afraid. There was a real possibility of being thrown off the barrier wall now. They’ve been trying to convince Artpe that their main houses didn’t possess any Magic Stones, or they talked about not having the authority to sell the Magic Stones. In a flash, they had changed their tune. It was as if they had convinced the head of their families through telepathy.

However, the price of items changed in a fluid manner. In fact, there were cases where the role of buyers and seller could switch. The nobles and merchants were still unaware of this possibility.

“No, I’m the one that’ll be selling.”

“W....what are you selling?”

“What am I selling?”

“Have you finally lost your mind?”

Mycenae’s cold voice entered into the ears of all the humans gathered atop the barrier wall. Her words flowed like water. It was as if she had prepared her words beforehand.

“I’m selling the rights to be protected by this barrier wall. All the citizens, nobles and merchants of Diaz had helped in acquiring the Magic Stones. They are also carrying out various tasks like cleaning up the city. They have paid the price. As it so happens, the foreign nobles and merchants gathered here haven’t contributed anything.”

“What? This is a structure that is part of the lay of this land. How can you claim rights to it.....”

“Ah, this isn’t just a structure.”

Artpe grinned as he placed his hand on the wall. The enormous barrier wall started to slowly contract in size. The nobles felt the change, and they were taken aback.

“If I wanted, I can reduce the size of the barrier wall. It is possible for me to install this anywhere I want. That’s right. I can move this barrier back to where the 3rd tier barrier is right now, so I can protect only the people that has the rights to be protected.”

“M...my god.....”

“This doesn’t make any sense! How can you decrease the size of the enormous wall through just your will!”

“You want to test me?”

Artpe’s laughter deepened. The barrier wall decreased further in size, and it reached a point where the monsters clamoring in the ocean could realistically think about jumping over the wall.

[Kyahhhhhhhk!]

[They are coming towards us. We have to produce some kind of result or we will be punished!]

[Kill them! We have to kill them!]

It was unknown as to what kind of connection there was between the Kraken and the mermen, but they started throwing their spears towards the top of the wall. It was hard to tell if they were screaming or yelling as they threw their spears! A lucky throw of the spear hit a knight on his helmet. Everyone on the wall ducked.

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhk!”

“I...I’ll buy it! I’ll buy the right to be protected by this wall!”

“I’ll buy it too!”

In truth, he was already at his limits as to how small he could make the barrier wall. As the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings, his Bluff skill had pierced the heavens as to how good it was. He had activated his skill, and he had delivered a critical hit.

Everyone present really believed he could move this wall to wherever he wanted!

“All right. I’ll take 3 level 200 Magic Stones from each of you. I will provide the communication magic and the transfer magic for free. Let us start the trade.”

This was how Mycenae was able to acquire Magic Stones needed to Reinforce the barrier wall without making any payments. She was actually able to acquire more Magic Stones than the number he needed. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he watched the people desperately try to contact their home country and main family.

“It really seems humans can’t come to their senses unless they are pushed to the edge of the cliff.”

“Isn’t it? They are really detestable.”

“It is also true that you tried to make a profit when the possibility of a trade became assured. You are the same as them.”

If it wasn’t for Artpe’s bluff, Mycenae’s plan would have been blown into pieces. He rolled his Mana String into round ball, and he gave a light blow to Mycenae’s head. She grumbled as she pouted.

“Do you know how much I’ve already invested into this venture? If this deal hadn’t worked out, I might have had to give up on being a merchant. I would have had to run away. In my attempt to gain Achievement for my high rank Class, I might have lost everything. If it hadn’t worked out, I would have been so depressed that I wouldn’t have been able to shove bread down my throat.”

When he listened to her, he realized she had a point. It was true that he had been able to acquire 500 Magic Stones thanks to her. That was why he decided not to interrogate her any further.

‘There is only one problem left.... Etna isn’t here yet?’

When he successfully used his Reinforcement again, everyone

believed that they would be saved. In truth, this was a dud if Etna wasn't here.

‘Etna, let's hold hands this once. I was so careful as to not go against the conditions of the Absolute Control.....!’

The Kraken was close enough to Frate that the civilians within the city could see it. Artpe watched as Maetel desperately tried to block the Kraken. She was giving it all including using her Acceleration and Blink. He unconsciously clenched his fists.

“Hoo-ooh.... Hooht! Ha-aht!”

[Goo-wuhhhhhhhhhh!]

Usually, the user of the Acceleration ability suffered from the enormous aftereffect that came with using the ability. The aftereffects increased when one used it more and more. Currently, Maetel hadn't just used the ability once or twice. She had used it over several dozen times, and she was using it in rapid succession.

Even if he was providing her with his Mana, the damages caused when using the ability couldn't be shouldered by Artpe. It was clear to Artpe's eyes that Maetel was slowing down.

‘Shit..... I guess it really was too much for us. Should I just run away with them? All right. If she doesn't show up when Maetel uses two more Acceleration, I won't look back.....’

At that moment, a mature voice of a woman could be heard in his ears. She wasn't the main character, yet she had made her entrance with exquisite timing!

[Artpe.]

[Etna, you.... Message magic?]

Artpe's expression crumpled. As soon as he heard the message magic, he activated his Read All Creation ability. He confirmed that she hadn't come anywhere near the barrier wall. She was using a long distance method to deliver her message. In the end, it

meant that she wasn't going to show herself here!

[I want to make this clear.... I might be able to do so after all of this concludes. However, I can't step forward right now. If you come to me, I can hold your hand. However, it is impossible for me to approach you first. It is impossible for me to hold your hand.]

“.....shit.”

It seemed the Demon King's Absolute Control placed on her had become more complex than the one from his previous life. Artpe grinded his teeth as he tried to figure out what he should do. Then he picked up on a clue from her words.

[Wait a moment. I can hold your hand if I go to you?]

[.....yes]

Of course, Artpe couldn't leave his place atop the wall. However, it seemed being observed by other people was the only reason why she couldn't come here. If there was a way to bring her magical energy to him.....

‘Can I do this through the Mana String?’

Until now, he had used his Mana String to connect himself to an item or someone else. He had never made a connection between two separate entities. He had never attempted it in the past, but it was possible.

[All right. I'll send it to you.]

[Huh? Send?]

First, he made several dozen Mana Strings, and he connected the ends to the barrier wall. He sent the other end straight towards where Etna was hiding.

[Oh my? This contains your Mana. It was generated using your Mana.... What the hell is this? It is an incredibly high rank magic!]

Artpe knew Etna had sufficient ability to be able to identify the Mana String. As expected, she reacted immediately.

Artpe sent her a firm and short message.

[I want you to grab that.]

[.....Artpe, I thought you wanted to hold my hand?]

Had she expected some kind of romantic gesture? Etna answered him, and he could hear disappointment in her voice. Still, she obediently grabbed onto the Mana String. Artpe felt a thrill when the Demon King's innate ability didn't activate.

“Artpe-nim, I brought the rest!”

“You have excellent timing. This is very good.”

He already had prior experience of doing two Reinforcement at once! He immediately took the pouch from Mycenae, and he threw it into the air. At the same time, Etna's oppressive magical energy of fire rode along the several dozen Mana Strings. It was being transferred into the barrier wall!

However, it didn't end there. Maetel was desperately calling out his name from across the wall!

“Artpe, I'm at my limits! I can no longer stall it!”

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“Kyahh. That side has impeccable timing too! Shit!”

The Kraken sensed a massive amount of Mana being concentrated at the barrier wall. It gave up on killing Maetel, and it charged straight for Frate. The Kraken hadn't been too far from the port, so its enormous body rammed into the barrier wall before Artpe could activate his Reinforcement skill!

[Koo-ahhh-ohhhhhhhhh!]

“Kyahhhhhhhhk! Ah, Artpe-nim! Hurry! Hurry!”

“Magician! Magicia-ahhhhhhhhhhh!”

The effect of the attack was amazing! Just a single charge from the Kraken put a crack in the barrier wall, which had been

Reinforced three times. The Kraken's tentacles were thick, and it was dozen meters long. They shot forward like waves as the tentacles threatened the people atop the wall!

“Uh. Uh-hoo.”

“Kraken. T...the Kraken is right in front of our noses.”

“Magician-nim! Magician-nim!”

Its truly devastating destructive ability and the visual it presented drove the people out of their minds. Artpe bit his lips when it looked as if the tentacles were threatening to climb over the wall.

“I can't move while I use Reinforcement. Maetel, do something!”

“Eeek. I understand. I'll try!”

[Goo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

[We follow its order!]

[We cannot refuse. Kill the human!]

Maetel dragged her tired body forward as she tried to desperately interfere with the Kraken, but the school of mermen got in her way.

“You dare! You guys should all disappear!”

[We won't sink alone.]

[We will take you down with us, human!]

Maetel had raised her Berserk to its peak state, and she was cutting down everything in her path. However, the number of mermen crowding the coastal waters were overwhelming. She kept swinging her sword, yet there was no daylight.

“Eeeek!”

“Shit. It's shaking……!”

Artpe was so frustrated that he was about to lose his mind. He

was successful in incorporating Etna's Mana and the Mana of the Magic Stones. Everything had been going smooth, and he just needed to complete his Reinforcement Skill. However, he was having a hard time progressing in his Reinforcement when there were interruptions.

“A little bit faster.... Shit....!”

Artpe was repairing the shaking wall in real time as it took the Kraken's full powered attacks. At the same time, he was trying his best to continue the Reinforcement. It wasn't enough. At this rate, the wall would fall before he could finish his Reinforcement!

“I'll be there, oppa!”

Sienna had been tasked to lure Etna. She had been successful in her mission, and she arrived at that moment. She jumped atop the barrier wall in one fell swoop, and she let out a sonorous shout. Her two hands were filled with magical energy, and she was holding up a sledge hammer that was letting out light.

“Unni did it, so I can do it too!”

“Sienna... You... Hey!”

It was reminiscent to what Maetel did earlier. Sienna dived towards the ocean! Fortunately, the mermen were focused on Maetel, and the Kraken was focused on the barrier wall. No one was paying attention to her.

“Hoo-ahhhhhhhhhhp!”

It was surprising as to the degree in which no one paid any attention to Sienna. When she was about to collide, she focused all her magical energy into her sledge hammer. She brought it down on the Kraken's head!

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

At that moment, the Kraken had been filled with the thought of destroying the barrier wall. It suddenly came to a stop as all its

tentacles writhed in pain. Sienna hadn't reached level 170 yet, but she had caused a debilitating pain to be felt by the Kraken. It was a surprising turn of event. She might have caused more damage than Maetel.

“Good job, Sienna!”

If he had his Read All Creation ability activated, he could have seen how this was possible. However, he had more important things to do! Artpe didn't lose this chance to further his Reinforcement. Etna was still connected to the barrier wall. She gritted her teeth as she sent him a message.

[How much of my magical energy are you planning on taking!]

[I just wanted to hold your hand, so I have no idea.]

[We aren't holding hands, you swindler!]

His magical energy, Etna's magical energy and the magical energy of 320 Magic Stones coalesced into one. The magical energy morphed into a state that was suitable for the Reinforcement skill, and it spread throughout the barrier wall. In a flash, two successful Reinforcement had occurred!

[Hellfire Sentinel+5]

[Hellfire was infused to complete the barrier wall. Any being below level 200 cannot damage the wall. In the case of water or ice type beings, one would have to be at least level 300. The barrier wall's durability can be consumed all at once to execute a powerful fire type attack with area of effect.]

“It's done!”

Artpe let out a cheer in an ungentlemanly fashion. Everyone, who had been watching him, had a confused expression on their face. Until now, the Reinforcement had been accompanied by light, and loud changes. No changes were seen.

“Magician, nothing has changed.....?”

“Did you perhaps cheat us!”

“M...my Magic Stones! Give me back my Magic Stones! It is worth 45 thousand gold!”

“Hoo.”

He smirked when he saw the unenlightened get mad. Afterwards, Maetel used her final Acceleration to grab the unconscious Sienna, who was plummeting towards the water. Then she went straight towards the top of the wall.

“Artpe!”

The Kraken had taken a serious hit from Sienna, so it had fallen into a Stun status. The school of mermen tried to catch them in its stead, but it was impossible to catch up with Maetel, who was using Berserk and Acceleration. In the end, she was successful in landing on the wall with Sienna in tow.

“Did you succeed, Artpe?”

“Of course. You did well, Maetel. Also, Sienna.... Good. She is unharmed.”

She had fallen unconscious, because she had expelled all her magical energy at once. Aside from that fact, she was fine. Artpe brushed her head once. Sienna was breathing evenly. He extended his Mana String, and he wrapped them around the body of his party members.

“Everyone should be prepared.”

[Koo-rooooo-ahhhhhhhhhh!]

The Kraken was a beat too late in coming to its senses. It let out a roar as if the world was ending. The Kraken’s preys were snatched away. Its rage was on par with Maetel’s rage.

Artpe spoke.

“This round of vibration will be pretty strong.”

Afterwards, the Kraken charged towards the barrier wall, and there was a terrifying collision.

This was the flame created by the daughter of the Phoenix. It manifested itself in this world through a proxy.

Chapter 63 - Kraken (4)

When the Kraken collided with the barrier wall, hellfire came into existence. It shot out as if was about to burn the whole world. The hellfire burned as it crawled all over the body of the Kraken. It was a flame from a bygone era where humans of this world weren't able to face it.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhk! Koo-ahhhhhhhhh!]

The flame ruthlessly pierced through the Kraken's thick skin as it started to burn flesh, blood and innards. The murderous hellfire was trying to roast it alive. The Kraken lost all of its reason as it went berserk.

[Kee-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

As its struggles became fiercer, the barrier wall responded with more flames. It was unforgiving towards the attacker. The flames flooded forth, and it encircled the Kraken's entire body.

It was as if the flame had a will of its own. It was as if the flame was punishing the monster that had invaded the human territory.

“My god…….”

“If that really was created through the magician's power……”

“I have to concede the fact that 500 Magic Stones was worth investing in this barrier wall!”

There were enough monsters here to easily wipe out a single country, yet their charge was being blocked by a single wall. Of course, the barrier wall was Reinforced with fire, and it worked in concert with the vibration. The boiling ocean and churning the waters inflicted continuous damage to the monsters. The Kraken was also taking continuous damage. It couldn't be compared to the damage inflicted on it by Maetel and Sienna.

[Kee-heeeeeee!]

[W...we have to run away!]

The other monsters were swept up in the Kraken's rampage, and they were dying before they could even put up a fight. The vibration and heat emitted by the barrier wall couldn't be overcome by monsters under level 200. All the monsters in the vicinity of the Kraken died by being swept up in the Kraken's rampage.

"Mmmm?"

Several dozen monsters were being killed each second. This was the consequence for being near the mighty fight between the Kraken and the barrier wall. Artpe was looking at these monsters when he suddenly realized something. The Record and EXP of the dead monsters were being sucked into him.

'Is it because I was acknowledged as the owner of the barrier wall.....?'

He had talked about transferring the ownership of the barrier wall to Mycenae, but this was a human matter. The wall wouldn't care about trade since Artpe had Reinforced the wall.

'In my past life, I've never benefited from using this type of Artifacts so I had no idea..... However, I can feel it right now. There is a firm connection between me and the Hellfire Sentinel.'

The Mana String connecting the wall to Etna was severed long ago. Currently, the supersized artifact was solely under the jurisdiction of Artpe.

Moreover, the number of monsters killed by the heat and vibration emitted by the barrier wall would soon reach 10 thousand. Many of these monsters were well below level 100, but at this number, Artpe's level would rise.

'Maybe I should just live up here until the Lunatic Wave ends.'

His level was increasing even as he did nothing. The experience was so sweet that he was having thoughts that were slightly off.

However, Artpe quickly gave up on the idea he was having.

A single level rose from the death of 10,000 monsters. By the time he reached level 200, he would barely be able to raise a single level even if he could gather all the monsters of the ocean to crash against the barrier wall.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

“T...the Kraken is continuing its attack.”

“Everyone get down from the barrier wall! It will overtake us soon!”

“That monster!”

The Kraken’s thrashing was becoming more severe. The Kraken suffered excruciating pain and burns on each attack, but it didn’t back down. Either its body would fail or the barrier would fall. The choice was binary. It wouldn’t stop until the end.

“Ah, Artpe-nim. Are you really sure the wall can stop it?”

“Absolutely.”

He had completed this wall with the help of Etna, so this wall wouldn’t fall. The Kraken was probably aware of this fact, yet it didn’t stop.

Why was this?

Was the Kraken normally this stupid?

That couldn’t be it. The Kraken had gained a good amount of intelligence over the years. The wall wasn’t something that could be easily overcome. It should have retreated after one or two attacks. The Kraken was supposed to be a sensible monster. It should have put its own survival over all else.

So why was it acting like this? Its body was so large that he couldn’t find the answer initially. However, his Read All Creation was bringing in bits and pieces of information in real time. In the end, he found his answer.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

[Irregular Status: It is spellbound by the curse of Madness.]

The curse of Madness had been placed on the Kraken.

[Koo-haaaaaaa!]

[We follow the Kraken!]

[W...we'll follow it. We'll destroy the wall!]

There were a good number of monsters inflicted by this curse. They knew their deaths were assured, yet they rabidly crashed into the wall. The monsters met their promised deaths. The sight reminded him of what happened within the auction house not too long ago. He had fought against Demons that weren't of sound mind. He now knew who had placed the curse on the Kraken and the monsters. The answer was quite obvious.

When the Demons activated the cursed magic circle within the city, the magic must have traveled towards the monsters of the ocean to trigger a similar magic.

They weren't just trying to induce a Lunatic Wave. The Demon King's army had decided to bury Diaz. The plan was meticulous, and it had been well executed.

If Artpe hadn't been here, it would have been a horrible massacre. The thought made him shudder.

“The Demon King's army is moving for real now.....”

The artifacts related to the curse, the magic spell that was activated within Frate and the Lunatic Wave meshed together in an intricate manner to create this situation. No matter how he thought about it, something was definitely off about the chef! The Demon King's army didn't move in this style!

It seemed the information he gained from Etna was lacking. He let out a sigh as he had this thought.

Everyone was still looking at him.

“What? You should all go do your assigned tasks. Why are you all standing around like this?”

He was taken aback at their unexpectedly undivided attention. He tilted his head in puzzlement. When they saw this, Mycenae acted as the representative for the group. She asked him a question. The light in her eyes was truly earnest.

“Artpe-nim, how long do we have to hold out like this?”

“I’m not sure. I guess we’ll do this until their madness end, and they get tired.”

“Can’t you kill it....? As it stands, the people will continue to live in fear.”

“Ajumma, can you truly ask me in good conscience as to whether I can kill it when you look at the size of that bastard?”

An extra large monster of Kraken’s caliber had significant amount of recuperative powers. It was no joke.

He had pooled together everyone’s power to create this barrier wall, but it only had the power to deter the Kraken. Over half of the damage received from the wall was recovered through its natural recuperative powers. It would probably take one or two month for it to die. Even that timeline was overly optimistic.

“That is why we have to give up on the idea of killin.....”

“Magician, we have to kill that Kraken.”

Someone interrupted Artpe’s words. He looked towards the noble. This particular noble was someone that held a lot sway amongst the foreign nobles. If Artpe had to guess, he probably was a count or a duke.

“At this rate, we will have no excuse we can give to our respective countries. Just my country alone lost around 100 Magic Stones. At such a cost, we can only expect to hold out and hope for the Kraken

to turn back? Of course, I am well aware that our survival itself is a miracle, but you have to think about what our respective countries will think.”

“So what you are saying right now is.... You need some result that would justify the use of the Magic Stones?”

“As expected of a magician, you are wise. You hit the nail on the head.”

The noble let out a bitter laugh. Since they had already surrendered the Magic Stones, they needed a result that matched what they spent. It was a valid line of reasoning, so Artpe heard the noble’s case.

However, that’s as far as he went.

“As I’ve said, you are asking for impossible. The only thing I promised was the safety of the city and your lives.”

“It really will be tough for all of us. I’m sure this will affect Diaz’s relationship with the other countries. Can’t you do anything about this?”

The noble spoke those words thinking Artpe was a citizen of Diaz. It was basically a threat. The noble was implying that Diaz would be put in a disadvantageous position if Artpe didn’t step up.

Artpe snorted when he heard the nobleman’s words. He was a Demon that was reborn as a human. The emotional attachment he had towards the country he was affiliated was almost nonexistent.....

“Look here, ajusshi. It is truly regrettable that it has to be this way, but I have no method available to me that would allow me to kill the Kraken. This will end in sorrow if you threaten someone who doesn’t have the ability to do anything.”

“Didn’t you already create several miracles already!”

“That was all done through my ability. Those weren’t miracles.

They are called miracles, since it never happens!”

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

As if it was responding to Artpe’s annoyed voice, the Kraken rammed into the barrier wall once again. At that moment, something that made him question his eyes occurred.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh! Goo-oh-ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!]

The rampaging Kraken had thrown its entire body towards the barrier wall, and a very small crack formed on the wall.

“Uh.....”

The cracks were so small that only the owner of the Read All Creation ability was sure of what had happened. The wall had cracked. Moreover, once a crack forms, there was a high probability that the crack would widen.

Cold sweat started flowing down Artpe’s back.

“What’s wrong, Artpe-nim?”

“A miracle that is slightly disadvantageous towards us has occurred.....”

In the case of Ice type and Water type monsters, there was no way in hell it could have caused any meaningful damage to the wall unless the monster was over level 300.

This wasn’t supposed to happen.

So how could a level 267 Kraken accomplish this? How? Until now, its strikes hadn’t done anything to the barrier wall!

‘Wait a moment. Now that I think about it.....?’

In an instant, something flashed within his mind.

A normal Kraken was always categorized as pure Ice type monster or a Water type monster. There was no exceptions to this rule.

However, the Kraken had flinched when it took an impact wound

from Sienna. It was the reason why Artpe hadn't been late in completing his Reinforcement.

Why did it do that?

A mere curse of Madness shouldn't have caused such repulsion from Sienna's magical energy!

As he held this question in his mind, Artpe turned to look at the Kraken. He once again activated his Read All Creation, and he finally figured it out.

[Kraken]

[Level : 267]

[The experiment for Demonification had failed. Several curses related to the mind had been stacked. The Demonic gene is out of control.]

'My god..... This is connected to the Demonification experiments conducted in Diaz!?'

The Kraken was a pure Ice or Water type monster. However, the failed experiment had imbued twisted properties of a Demon unto the Kraken, and it was boosting the Kraken's power. When he realized this fact, Artpe unconsciously mumbled to himself.

"I have to kill it....."

"I knew it! It is possible!"

"There is a fundamental difference between a task one can do, and a task one must accomplish even at the risk of one's life. Anyways, you guys should get out of here."

"What?"

The nobles were enraged by Artpe's harsh words. Artpe snorted as he spoke.

"The wall will fall soon. If that is fine with you, you can ride on your high horse by staying here."

“Why would this wall fall.....”

[Koo-ooooooooohng!]

At that moment, the Kraken rammed into the wall again. The Hellfire Sentinel sent out stronger flame and vibration. As a price, it couldn't avoid the fairly large crack from forming. This time other people realized what had happened.

“T...the wall is...”

“Run away! Everyone get down from the wall!”

Artpe didn't go out of his way to help them. He didn't owe them anything. Aside from Artpe, Mycenae, Maetel and Sienna, everyone quickly clung to the wall. It took them less than a minute to evacuate from the wall. They practically jumped off the wall, and they ran towards downtown.

Artpe was in awe when he saw this.

As expected, humans were able to perform superhuman feats when their lives were on the line. It would have been great if they could have used some of that superhuman ability in fighting the Kraken. The fact that they couldn't do so was a shortcoming that couldn't be fixed.

[Ka-hahhhhhhhh! Kee-ahhhhhhhhhh!]

When it realized there was a crack forming in the wall, the Kraken's rampage became increased in intensity as time passed. The corpses of dead monsters filled the ocean. There was so many bodies that they were starting to stack up. As Artpe's level grew, his restlessness grew alongside it.

“I trusted in you, Artpe-nim!”

The one to take this development the hardest was Mycenae. If the Kraken couldn't be defeated, it would be the end for her!

“You learned a great lesson, ajumma. You shouldn't trust people so easily from now on.”

“Eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee!”

He spoke in a playful manner, but Artpe’s head was still churning to come up with a way to defeat the Kraken.

Fortunately, he had an outline of a plan that would allow him to kill the Kraken. It was the Hellfire Sentinel. The wall’s durability could be consumed at once to inflict a powerful area of effect fire attack. The wall’s final attack still remained.

‘The problem remains that I have no idea if that single attack will kill the Kraken.’

If it died from the final attack, it would create a happy ending. If not, they would be in a far worse situation. If the Kraken was still alive, it didn’t matter how critical of a wound he could inflict on the Kraken. The Kraken would easily destroy the 2nd and 3rd tier barrier wall constructed by the humans.

‘I have to find some way to weaken it..... But how? Shit. I haven’t learned any proper magic yet!’

Magicians were beings that possessed unfathomably strong powers. Unfortunately, most of the great magics that could turn the tide of the battle could be learned after level 200. Artpe’s level was still lacking, and such precious magic spells rarely came on the market.

This was why Artpe wanted to cross the ocean to Aedia as soon as possible! He wanted to be in the land of magicians!

“I have no choice. Somehow, I’ll.....”

[Nyaa.]

“Nyaa?”

Artpe was grinding his teeth as he was about to quickly yank free his Mana Strings.

At that moment, he heard a strange voice ring in his ears. Artpe repeated the voice he heard. It just slipped out of his mouth.

Maetel looked at Artpe with sparkling eyes. Her eyes said she was about to perish from the cuteness of his action.

“Artpe, we are in such a desperate situation, yet you are playing such a prank! Jeez! You are too cute!”

“No, I didn’t.....”

[Nyaa!]

Artpe immediately closed his mouth. Just in case, he quickly turned around to see if it was Etna. However, she was hiding within the shadow of the streets. She had her eyes firmly closed as she clasped both her two hands together. She was earnestly wishing for his victory. She looked suited for the role of a holy maiden rather than a Demon.

‘Then who.... Ah?’

Fortunately, he found the answer shortly.

No, it was more accurate to say the answer came to him.

[Nyaa! Nyaan!]

“You.....”

Something flew at lightning speed through the air, and it latched onto Artpe’s arm. Then it rubbed its head against his robe.

It had black fur, and its purple eyes shone much brighter from within the darkness. It was shaking its tail in a threatening manner, and it fearlessly stretched its four legs..... Artpe activated his Read All Creation ability, and he was able to confirm its identity.

“You..... You were a cat?”

[Nyahhhhhh!]

It stood 20 centimeters tall, and if one included its tail, it was 40 centimeters long. The cat let out a fierce cry.

After stuffing itself, the Greed Beast had finally came to see its

owner.

Chapter 64 - Kraken (5)

[Nyaaaaaaaaa.]

There was an intruder on top of the barrier wall. Despite the fact that they they were in a desperate situation, the atmosphere amongst the hero's party was shaken for a brief moment.

“What is that black cat, Artpe?”

“I don't care about the cat. We have to do something about the Kraken right now, Artpe-nim!”

“Everyone be quiet for a moment.”

[Nyaa, nyaa-ah-ah-, nyaa-ooh-ee-ooh-ah!]

When the Greed Beast was born, there had been a feast prepared right in front of its newly opened eyes. It seemed a deep impression had been created on the Greed Beast. It started talking about which one was tasty, and it went into the topic of how some curses were sweeter than others. It started describing its impression of what it ate. This was useless information to Artpe, but it seemed there was a different taste to each curse and evil energy.

[Nyahh, nyaa-oooh, nyaa-nyaa-ah!]

“Yes, yes. I'm glad you were able to eat such delicious foods.”

As Mycenae had pointed out, he couldn't leisurely play with the cat right now. However, he couldn't hide the smile that had formed on his lips when he saw it. The Greed Beast had sought him out.

It felt as if he had just unearthed the final key that would solve this situation.

“So are you a bit full now?”

[Nyaaaaa.]

“You ate that much, yet you are still hungry. Yes, all right.”

“Huh? Artpe can understand what it is saying?”

“Yes, I’m its owner.”

Everyone else heard cute cries coming from the cat, but Artpe clearly understood the intent behind the noises it created. There was a powerful connection between Artpe and the Greed Beast. It was something that couldn’t be replicated even with a Soul Contract.

This was also something that was unique to the Magician Class. It was the power of ‘Familiar Control’.

Normally, magical energy was imbued into a living creature to form a contract. When animals become familiars, they were given superior abilities and intelligence compared to the normal animals.

Most magicians chose birds for its ability to fly, but there were eccentric magicians out there that chose cats, mice or even bugs as familiars.

However, there was a rule.

‘Monsters couldn’t be made into familiars. The only thing close to such a skill is the Demon race’s Control skill.....’

However, this wasn't a normal monster. It was a beast that was in charge of one of the 7 Deadly Sins, and he had unwittingly created a Familiar contract with it.

Was this possible because he was a hero!

This shouldn’t be possible even if he was a hero!

However, that wasn’t important right now.

The important fact was that the cat was still hungry.

“Look at that.”

[Nyaa?]

The cat climbed up his arm, and he willingly allowed the cat to

perch on his shoulder. He raised a finger to point at the Kraken. Its gluttony had originated from consuming curses, so of course, the Greed Beast could recognize what he was pointing out.

“Can you feel it?”

[Nyaa!? Nyahhhhhh!]

There was an appetizing curse energy infused within the Kraken’s enormous body. The Greed Beast had purples eyes that resembled Artpe’s eyes. Its eyes shone from excitement. The cat was showing signs of wanting to attack the Kraken at that very moment. He calmed the cat by speaking in a level manner.

“I want you to eat all of that. However, that bastard is a scary monster, so you have to be careful. If not, you might get hurt.”

[Nyaaaaaaa!]

The Greed Beast snorted at Artpe’s words, which was tinged with worry.

If it was hit by the big brute, it would no longer call itself the Greed Beast. It would call itself the Groan Beast. When the cat gave such a reply, Artpe nodded his head in a solemn manner.

“All right. Come back after you are done. When you succeed, I’ll give you a pretty name.”

He had given the cat its first instruction.

[Nyaaaaaaa!]

After it received its orders, the confluence of evil Greed energy hidden within the small cat manifested itself in the form of a black fog. It charged towards the ocean. The eyes of Maetel and Mycenae turned round when they saw this.

“I knew it had too much magical energy, but it wasn’t a cat in the first place!”

“It isn’t a living organism!? Aht! Now that I think about it, I saw the trace of its Mana within the auction house....”

“Shhh. Curiosity killed the Dark Elf merchant.”

“You are too selective in giving details!”

Mycenae wanted to ask him about what happened to all the items that had been inside the auction house. However, she knew they would all be in trouble if she voiced such thoughts out loud. This was why she firmly bottled up the urge.

“I’m not sure what’s going on, but can we win now, Artpe?”

Maetel asked the question instead of Mycenae. Her eyes were brilliant as if they were emeralds, and her eyes were filled with her trust towards Artpe. Artpe grinned as he answered her.

“If we can’t win with this gambit, we have to break this off cleanly. We’ll run away. Everyone should gather your stuff, so we can run away at any moment.”

He spoke in a dependable manner, but his words had turned towards a cowardly direction!

“Artpe-niiiiim!”

“That is why I told you all to get down from here.”

Artpe placed a hand on top of the barrier wall. It was a familiar sight. He had done the same thing several times as he Reinforced the wall. However, the Mana emanating from him was different. It was very sharp and destructive.

The Mana was refined for purely destructive purposes. It looked as if he was making a set of Mana Strings before he returned it to pure Mana.

“Hurry. You should take Sienna along with you.”

If Sienna had been conscious, she might have been helpful against the Kraken, who was polluted by the Demonic gene. However, she had been put into unconsciousness through unnatural means. This was why Artpe had to do this somehow with the help of the Greed Beast!

“Go right now.”

He once again ordered the party members to head down, and his voice had taken a turn for the worse. However, Maetel pouted as she shook her head from side to side.

“I’m staying here with Artpe. Ajumma can take care of Sienna.”

“All right. You can stay here, and ajumma can take care of the rest.”

“Eeeek. I’m pretty sure I had a pretty active part in all of this not too long ago. Now you want me to meekly retreat with a party member in tow as if I’m some kind of an extra. I can’t stand it!”

Mycenae grumbled, but unlike her words, she obediently took Sienna down from the wall. Even if she was rotten, she was a Dark Elf. She didn’t need to rely on a ladder. Even with a person in tow, she bounced down the wall. The sight of her back looked really cool, but Artpe didn’t even glance at her. She was treated like an extra until the end.

[Koo-oohhhhng!]

[Nyaaaaaa!]

On the other side of the wall, the Kraken showed no signs of tiring as it continued its rampage. It was feeling pain from the flame and vibration, but it was using pain to fuel its anger. The curse of madness and the Demonic gene was a great combination. As time passed, the blackened flesh exfoliated from the Kraken’s large body, and its skin was getting tougher.

‘……if I let things go on any further, a new race like the Evil Reflector might be born here.’

However, the Kraken was unable to create such an anomalous event, because the Greed Beast was present. The Greed Beast was able to consume curses within Demons and humans. Of course, it would be able to extract the curse from a big dumb squid!

As a the owner of the Read All Creation, he wanted to see a new Record being made. However, he wouldn't jeopardize his life to see it.

Artpe spread his Mana into the entirety of the barrier wall as he sincerely wished for the Greed Beast to finish its mission safely. He couldn't drag this out any longer. He had to end this by striking a decisive blow.

“Artpe, there are more cracks forming on the wall.”

“It's all right. It'll becomes easier for me to attack as it breaks the barrier wall. My attack procedure is already in place. It'll immediately engage as soon as the wall falls. The remaining problem is the timing of the attack.”

Best timing...

He had to wait until all the curse and evil energy to be taken by the Greed Beast. The Kraken had to be in a structurally unstable state. Artpe was using his Read All Creation ability to hone in on the right moment. An endless light emanated from him as he continuously monitored the status of the Hellfire Sentinel and the Kraken's body.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhh!]

[Nyaa, nyaaahhhhh!]

The Krakken was obsessed with trying to break the Hellfire Sentinel, so it didn't notice the Greed Beast invading its body. It was as the Greed Beast had guaranteed. The cat leisurely burrowed into various parts of the Kraken's body, and it stuffed itself of cursed Mana. It didn't take too long for a change that was visible to the eyes to occur.

[Koo-ha-ahhhh, kee-ooh-ahhhhhh!]

The Kraken charged once again, and an enormous collision occurred. At that moment, a part of its thickened skin, which had formed over time, to fall off!

Black blood erupted from where the crust used to be, and it lessened the power of the curse within the Kraken. It let out a cry of pain, and the Greed Beast shouted with joy.

[Koo-oh-ahhhhh!]

[Nyahhhhhh! Nyah-ooh-oh-ahhh!]

“Is that cat trying to copy the scream of the Kraken?”

[Koo-ohhhhhhhh!]

The Kraken was feeling pain, yet it looked as if it was trying to forget the current pain by producing a bigger pain. It madly rammed itself into the barrier wall. The vibration was caused naturally by the wall, but the tremors caused by the Kraken’s attack amplified the vibration. It was bad enough that a normal person would immediately fall.

“A little bit more.... Just a little bit more.....!”

[Koo-oh-ahhhhh!]

As the wall kept losing its durability, Artpe carefully inspected the wall. He mumbled to himself in a dejected manner. The Greed Beast started to consume the curse at a much rapid pace as instructed. The blood mixed with the curse flowed from various parts of the Kraken’s body, but the Kraken was showing no signs of slowing down.

“I made a mistake. The Kraken is devoid of its soul. It might be the curse or the effects of the Demonification experiments, but there isn’t a single ounce of conscious thought left in its mind.”

“Artpe, the wall.....”

“I know! Shit!”

The Kraken’s power was much stronger than expected, so the wall was falling much faster than expected. Artpe was spreading his Mana to try to slow down the collapse. He was trying hard, but there was a limit to what his Mana could do.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhh!]

[Nyaaaaaaaaa!]

The Kraken intertwined several dozen tentacles, and it struck a powerful blow against the wall. The sound of the wall cracking could be heard, and one could see an unrecoverable wound form on the heart of the barrier wall. It was as if a lightning had struck the wall. The wall cracked in half from top to bottom. It formed right between Artpe and Maetel.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhh!]

“Artpe!”

“Maetel, you should get down before it is too late!”

“But!”

“Right now!”

Artpe sensed that the moment had come. It didn't matter if it hadn't been weakened all the way. Even if a single attack couldn't kill it, he had to use the attack right now. If not, the barrier wall would collapse, and that would be the end to everything.

“I ask his favor of you, Etna....!”

He was hoping Etna's prayer would reach the gods! If it did reach them, that would be a problem too! Artpe struck the wall with his mana-infused fist. He let out a shout that carried his anger!

“Dieeeeee!”

It happened when his magical energy spread to the entirety of the wall! The wall broke into countless fragments as it showered down towards the ground. Each of them were surrounded by hellfire, and they looked like comets falling from the sky.

[Koo-ohhhhhhhhhh!]

[Nyaa!? Nyaaaaaaahhhh!]

The Kraken's body had a lot of surface area, so he was being

pelted by the meteors! It let out a wretched scream. The Greed Beast was burrowed inside the Kraken's body, so it didn't receive any damage. However, it made a fuss by asking why Artpe was attacking the Kraken when it wasn't finished eating. However, that was of no concern to Artpe.

“You should eat as much as you can then you should retreat!”

[Nyaa! Nyaa-ah! Nyaa-ah-ah!]

Artpe bit his lips as he slowly fell through the air. He was checking how critical of a damage each of the massive amounts of rocks were causing. He came to the conclusion that it wasn't enough.

The Kraken was refined by the life energy of the ocean, and the demonic energy. It had become extremely hard, strong and durable. The attack would destroy 70% of the Kraken's body, but the remaining 30% could easily lay waste to Frate.

It wasn't enough. Even if it was half dead, he couldn't win against it. He couldn't kill it.

They had to run away.

When he came to that conclusion, a laugh came out unbidden. He finally grasped his station in the world. It was so pathetic that he couldn't stand it.

‘The skill of running away with exquisite timing is one of the skills needed for the weakest amongst the Four Heavenly Kings. Heroes are the only one that could fight a fair fight until the end to come out on top. I'm a fake, so this was impossible from the start. I should just run away, and they could curse me for doing so. This is obvious to me now.’

He fell slowly towards the ocean as countless fragments either grazed or hit the Kraken. In that short amount of time, he took some time for introspection.

The sense of defeat filled his body, and it couldn't be erased. Who

the hell did he think he was? Why did he step forward in a battle that couldn't be won? Did he unconsciously become drunk on the respect given to him by other people?

It was truly funny. No, it wasn't funny at all.

'I don't have any right to deride the humans. It seems I was born as a human, and I've been influenced by the way of humans. All right. I realize this now. We have to run away. I'll run away with Maetel and Sienna. This time I'll do it the rightway from the beginning. I will never stepforward again. I'll do everything from the back. It is sufficient for Maetel to be the only one in the front line. Yes, this is it.'

"Artpe!"

".....huh?"

Someone interrupted Artpe's thoughts, which was expanding in an uncontrollable manner. Artpe was relying on the gravitation pull to descend. When he dumbly turned to look, he identified the owner of the voice. He caught sight of Maetel. She was relying on the Blink Boots he had put on her feet to run towards him.

"Idiot, we have to run away now....."

"I got you..... Record Divide!"

Maetel didn't listen to Artpe's words as she used Blink. When she grabbed his robe, she activated her Unique skill.

She was trying to share her magical energy through her skill, but what would that accomplish? He was about to snort when he felt the magical energy flow into him. His insides became numb.

"You... How.....?"

It wasn't Maetel's magical energy.

This was obvious, but it wasn't Artpe's magical energy either.

"Artpe, can you do it now?"

He was taken aback by Maetel's question, but he firmly nodded his head as an answer.

"I'll try."

"Yes. That's my Artpe!"

Maetel let out a bright smile, and Artpe couldn't help but snicker. His whole body had been dominated by the feeling of helplessness. Now it felt as if energy and hope was surging up within him.

The magical energy flowing into him was the type of magical energy that absolutely negated the demonic energy.... It was the magical energy of Sienna, who was still unconscious.

Chapter 65 - Kraken (6)

Maetel had used Record Divide to deliver magical energy to Artpe. It wasn't her own magical energy. She had brought Sienna's magical energy. In the process of experiencing the Record Link and Artpe's Mana Link, she had perfected her unique skill!

Originally, it was a skill that allowed her to share spells and abilities with Artpe. However, she had brought along Sienna's ability too. Something incomprehensible had happened.

However, Artpe didn't ask how this was possible. He used that time to think about how to kill the Kraken using this new factor.

The conclusion was simple. He just had to Reinforce the fragments that were still falling towards the Kraken.

If the Hellfire Sentinel was intact, it would have been impossible. However, it had broken apart completely, and each fragments were basically akin to a high rank consumable artifact. This was why it was possible for him to pull this off. He would have to consume a massive amount of Mana, but Artpe would be able to pull it off by squeezing out every ounce of Mana from within his body.

“Reinforcement.”

Artpe activated his skill, and at the same time, he took out the Demite's Gemstone. It couldn't be used as it was originally intended, since it wasn't completely refined. Despite this fact, it could be used in the manner he had used against the Slime. It could receive and amplify Artpe's magical energy.

“When I made the resolve to retreat, I never expected to be pushed back into another risky venture like this.....”

“This isn't risky. Artpe can do this.”

After transporting Sienna's magical energy, Maetel clung to Artpe. She gave up her remaining magical energy to him. The two

were clinging to each other, so they were falling faster towards the surface of the water. It was a desperate situation, yet she looked at Artpe with absolute conviction.

“We can do this.”

“……yes, you really can’t help but be a hero.”

The hero insisted on ‘we’. It was as if she was scoffing at Artpe, who had thought about doing all of this alone. She truly looked like the hero he had seen in his past life. It made him laugh. The laughter was a mixture of admiration towards her, and the derision he felt towards himself. It was a fifty-fifty mix.

Until now, he had recklessly tried to do everything by himself. When he found himself unable to succeed, he had labeled himself as a ‘fake hero’. He did as he pleased, and his thoughts were like a self-fulfilling prophecy. He had been ready to run away. Artpe had been under a misconception. Even in his past life, the hero had never tried to accomplish tasks by herself!

She had always had companions by her side. In his past life, Artpe couldn’t understand the reasoning behind it.

One plus one was always equaled two. Usually, conflict occurred when you put people together. There was a far greater chance of encountering a Dragon than to find people one was able to work synergistically with.

As a Demon, Artpe took no heed of others. He considered them to be hindrances, and he considered it fortunate if he wasn’t hurt by them. It wasn’t as if he liked being by himself. However, the situation, the era and the state of his mind at the time made him fly solo.

This was why he couldn’t completely discard his old habit even after his reincarnation. He was with Maetel and Sienna now. However, he had assessed their abilities, and he had put them in separate categories. He had acted as if he was being rational, and

he had done everything his own way. This was why he had only thought about sending away Maetel and Sienna from the front line. He had considered their roles to be done.

However, that wasn't true. Heroes had the ability to make the impossible possible. They made things that shouldn't exist together to be able to coexist with each other. The proof was right in front of him right now. Sienna's magical energy was being absorbed and amplified within the Demite's Gemstone.

Sienna's magical energy was being transferred through Maetel, and it was manifesting from Artpe's hands.

"We aren't a chimera. What the hell is this? It makes no sense."

"Heh heh. I didn't think it would work. However, when I tried really hard, it worked."

"How can you come here with such a mentality? You really are the worst."

She really was the worst. She was so ridiculous that he couldn't get annoyed with her. He could only laugh. He was happy. He would have to question her later on, but it was fine for now.

"Go."

Artpe spoke in a whisper as he unleashed the magical energy. It was transferred to all the fragments of Hellfire Sentinel that existed in this world. He activated his Reinforcement skill to Reinforce all of them again. He coated Sienna's magic around the fragments, and the flames were Reinforced. Their speed was increased, and a target was set.

His merciless eyes flashed as if he was the Demon King that would bring about the destruction to this world. In the next moment, his mouth opened once again, and he spat out fire with his words.

"Blow up the head of that damned squid!"

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhhh!]

Kraken wallowed within its pain as it roared, and it sent out its blackened tentacles.

Before they could reach Artpe and Maetel, white flaming comets hit the Kraken's body.

The attack was the complete opposite to the Kraken's attribute. Unlike the previous attacks, this attack melted the body at a fundamental level!

[Kyahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhk!]

[Nyaa!? Nyaahhhhhhhhh! Nyaa nyaa! Nyaa nyaa nyaa-ah-ah!]

The Kraken let out a desperate cry. The Greed Beast was taken aback. If it continued to be greedy, it might die alongside the Kraken. It quickly retreated. A twisted smile appeared on Artpe's lips when he heard the Kraken's roar and scream. It was a horrible shriek filled with a curse towards him.

'It is done. We won.'

When he was sure his Reinforcement was successful, he was dominated by the feeling of delight and accomplishment. They hadn't retreated. They had won. He didn't want to help those damn humans, but he was thrilled that he was able to finish all of this without holding himself in contempt.

It felt as if the parts that he felt deficient about himself was made whole. The one to fill that deficiency was the hero, who was falling with him.

[Koo-ohhhhhh, koo-ahhhhhhng!]

All the Mana within Artpe was emptying out, and he was steadily losing consciousness. He wondered if he was going to die after achieving victory. If he was hit by an errant tentacle, it would be the end of him. There was no way he could be that unlucky. At the very least, he wished Maetel to be safe.....

Countless thoughts crossed his mind. Even as they were plummeting towards the ocean, he caught sight of the hero. She refused to let go of his hand. He wasn't thinking anything. He instinctively called out the name of the hero.

“Maetel…….”

“Huh?”

Maetel had also exhausted all her Mana, so she was in the same boat as Artpe. She was close to losing consciousness. There wasn't a single ounce of energy within her voice as she responded to the tired voice of Artpe. He extended his hand to hold her lightly, and he spoke as if he was in a dream.

“Hurry…….”

“Yes…….”

He was moments away from losing consciousness. It was the moments after the victory. He wasn't of sound mind at that moment. Artpe spoke words that he would regret for the rest of his life.

“Grow faster... You.... ”

“Huh…… Huh!?”

Maetel was also losing consciousness like Artpe, but at his words, she instantly regained consciousness as she replied to his words.

He wanted her to grow faster? Why? Of course, there was only one reason why he would want this!?

“Ah. Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaartpe? Wait a moment. Can you say that again! Say it one more time!”

“Hooo…….”

However, Artpe couldn't finish his words as he lost complete consciousness. His body became slack. There was a good chance he wouldn't be able to remember his words even after he woke up.

“Eeeeeek…… All right, Artpe! I’ll grow up as soon as possible!”

However, Maetel had clearly received his words, so Maetel didn’t care what happened!

“Faster… If I grow up faster……! Artpe will….!”

Her eyes were burning with resolve and determination. It wasn’t up to her as to how fast she could grow, but such a small problem wouldn’t get in her way. It would be of no problem to her!

She’ll grow up fast. Artpe said he wanted her to grow up fast, so she would grow up fast! She would grow up fast, and……

“Ooh-ahhhhhhhhhht!”

She used her transcendent will and the power of love to regain full consciousness. She clutched Artpe’s unconscious body to her. In the next moment, the two plunged into the ocean together.

[Koo-ahhhhhhhhhng!]

“Oooh-ohhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

Artpe’s worries hadn’t been unfounded. The Kraken did execute a final attack, but it couldn’t scratch the burning will of Maetel. After squeezing out its least strength, the Kraken died in vain.

Maetel had used the power of her will to transcend everything. As she watched the end of the Kraken, she felt a massive and overwhelming amount of EXP flow into her and the members of her party. She was finally able to let go of her consciousness. It was the moment where the hero’s party had achieved complete victory against the Kraken.

[Nyaa…… Nyaa-ha-ha-ha-ha!]

The only one conscious until the end was the Greed Beast. It let out a roar of delight as if it owned the world.

As if it wanted to prove its own existence, it let out an evil cry that was filled with greed.

When Artpe opened his eyes, he saw two girls clinging onto him as they slept.

“This again?”

It was something that always happened, so he wasn't surprised. He let out a sigh as he raised his hand towards his head. However, he realized something was there. He felt soft fur that flowed downwards. He felt a warm sensation, and he felt a head rubbing against his palm in a cute manner.

[Nyaa.]

“It was you?”

Artpe gripped the Greed Beast by the back of the neck, and he brought it up in front of his eyes. It looked like a cat, but its fur was black as ebony, and it possessed purple eyes. No matter how one looked at it, it looked similar to Artpe.

“Did you get influence by me during your birth?”

[Nyaaa.]

“Yes, I see. You protected us while we slept? Thank you.”

[Nyaa, nyaa-ah-ah. Nyaaah!]

“That's right. I did say I'll give you a name.....”

Artpe thought about it for a brief moment before he opened his mouth.

“All right. How about Amethyst?”

[Nyaaaaaaaaaaaaah!]

It answered by saying it would rather be called the Greed Beast if it had to answer by that name. It seemed the cat wouldn't allow him to half-ass this. Artpe clicked his tongue as he spoke the next candidate.

“How about Roa?”

[Nyaa..... Nyaa, nyaa-ah!]

The cat said it wouldn't give the name a 100 points. It was mediocre, but it decided to accept the name. It nodded its head as it licked Artpe's cheek. It seemed the Greed Beast was fully mimicking a cat. Its rough tongue licked him, and it wasn't a bad feeling.

"How long have I been out?"

[Nyaa-ahhh.]

"Two days?"

[Nyaa.]

After expending a massive amount of Mana, he had fallen unconscious. Even if he had experience multiple level ups, he had been prepared to be unconscious for a week. However, the answer that came back from Roa was encouraging. A slight smile formed on his lips.

"Maetel and Sienna..... Good. It seems they will wake up soon too."

Maetel and Sienna probably pushed themselves more than he did. Still, the level 267 Kraken held massive amounts of EXP. It was divided into three... no, it was divided into four if Roa was included. Their levels had increased in a crazy manner. This was why the aftereffects of the fight had been reduced by an overwhelming amount.

Artpe felt truly relieved when he realized the girls weren't hurt. He was surprised at this emotion, but he accepted it. He brushed the head of the girls, who were acting spoiled.

"Ooh-mmm..... Artpe. Artpe."

"Still, level 215 is a bit much, Maetel."

He spoke such words, but Artpe's level was 216. It seemed his role in this venture had been much larger than Maetel, so the share of the EXP was skewed more towards him. He wondered if there had

been a time when his level had been higher than Maetel's level. He realized this was the first time it had happened. Once Maetel finds out about this, she probably would be incredibly happy.

‘Sienna is also at level 199. When she regains consciousness, I’m sure she will progress into her level 200 high rank Class.’

In killing the Kraken, she surely would have gained her Achievement. If she wasn’t able to acquire her high rank Class, no one in this world was qualified to get it. He was sure of it.

[Nyaa! Nyaa nyaaa!]

“Yes, yes. You were born not too long ago, yet you are level 150. How much curse did you eat?”

[Nyaa!]

“It isn’t just the curses?Uh?”

It spoke the truth. The Greed Beast or Roa hadn’t just eaten the curse energy like the curse of madness. It had eaten all the evil thoughts of other beings, and it even ate the Demonic gene of the Kraken. It had eaten everything in a greedy manner!

“Nothing is wrong with your body, right.....? If you suddenly become a thrall of the Demon King, I won’t hesitate to kill you.”

[Nyaa! Nyaa nyaa nyaa! Nyaa nyaa!]

Roa spoke out in anger at Artpe’s cold words. It said there was no way it would be controlled by such trivial energies. Still, there was a limit to how valiant one could be.

“It seems that wasn’t the only thing you ate. Can you spit them back out?”

[Nyaa-ah-ah.....?]

“You can digest anything I don’t need. You just have to give me the important stuff.”

[Nyaa..... Nyaa. Nyaa-ah.]

“Yes, you are a good girl.”

She was a smart beast that knew the reality of her current situation. She had no choice, but to obey Artpe’s words. Artpe scratched the back of her neck at her praiseworthy act. It seems it was quite pleasurable. She purred. She was completely a cat.

“You are awake, Artpe-nim!”

He was enjoying a rare moment of peace when the door suddenly opened. Mycenae charged into the room. Her ears were trembling with anger.

“If you are awake then please hear me out, Artpe-nim! Those assholes outside are talking about how they should divvy up the Kraken’s corpse!”

“What? They want to divvy up the Kraken’s corpse?”

Artpe answered with a dumbfounded voice. Mycenae vigorously nodded her head in anger.

“That’s right! They claim they had contributed in killing the Kraken by donating their Magic Stones. They are claiming they have partial rights to the corpse.... They only cooperated, because they had no choice if they wanted to live. They are being shameless!”

“First, calm down, Mycenae.”

“Ah-ooh-ooh.”

When Mycenae heard Artpe speak her name, she reflexively calmed down. He waited until the fluttering of her ears lessened. Then he nodded his head as he spoke.

“So they looted the Kraken? Did anything of significance come out?”

“No, if someone dared to touch it, a fight would have broke out. Therefore, no one has touched it yet.... No, that isn’t the important part! They are talking about divvying up the corpse

when the person responsible for killing the Kraken isn't present! It is unacceptable.....!"

"I see. They haven't tried to loot it yet. That is why everyone is still excited."

"What.....?"

Normally, Artpe would have been hopping mad, but his expression was as calm as it could be.

Mycenae had no idea what was going on, so her ears drooped. She had a dumbfounded expression on her face. Artpe petted the Greed Beast Roa, who was clinging to him. He nodded his head.

"Sure, they can divide it amongst themselves. It's all right. It isn't much."

"Artpe-nim..... Did you perhaps do something before you lost consciousness?"

"Me? Nope. I was unconscious, so how could I have done anything?"

Artpe smirked. Roa, who was nestled against Artpe, also smirked.

"I didn't do anything. I didn't."

[Nyaaaaaaaaaaa.]

There was no need to interpret what Roa's meow meant.

Chapter 66 - The Quest Isn't Done Yet (1)

As Artpe had predicted, Maetel and Sienna regained consciousness in short order. They were surprised at how much they had gotten stronger after they had woken up. This was especially true for Sienna. She was dazed.

“Oppa was able to kill the Kraken unscathed. What a relief..... Still, I think I received too much EXP. Also, my skill is strangely more powerful now.”

“That’s because you contributed the most in killing the Kraken..... Huh? It seems you aren’t aware of this fact. Maetel, did you really get Sienna’s consent before you brought her magical energy?”

Artpe’s question was sharper than Maetel’s long sword. Maetel turned up her smile to 120% as she answered him.

“My feelings and thoughts for Artpe is the same as Sienna! Of course, my feelings are much stronger compared to hers.”

Basically, she hadn’t received consent from Sienna. She was able to take and use someone else’s magical energy as she pleased. Artpe was having a hard time figuring out the skill called Record Divide. Before he did anything, he flicked Maetel’s forehead several times.

“I told you countless times that there is a close relationship between Mana and one’s life. If she hadn’t leveled up, Sienna would have been put in a precarious situation.”

“If I didn’t do it, Artpe would have died!”

“Oppa!? You almost died!?”

At Maetel’s words, Sienna freaked out as she reacted to the news. Maetel knew this was her chance. She told Sienna all about what Artpe and she had endured, while they faced the Kraken. After hearing the complete story, Sienna clapped her hands saying they had been fortunate.

“This means I was able to have a deep understanding with unni! I’m so happy. I’m so happy that I was able to help oppa.”

“There’s a deep understanding between the two of you? When did you two develop.... Ah.”

There was that incident. They had fought in broad daylight at the auction house. They spoke about squishy feelings that sounded as if they were revealing their hearts.... No, they were probably acting.

Artpe didn’t want to dig into it any further, so he shut his mouth. Instead, he grabbed Roa, who was perched on top of his head. She had been playing with his hair. He introduced Roa to them.

“This is Roa. She’ll be with us from now on. As you can see, she isn’t a normal cat. She’s the Greed Beast.”

[Nyaa.]

Roa lifted a paw as she gave her greeting. Even if they were told that she was the Greed Beast, she looked like a dignified black cat on the outside. Sienna was at an age where she loved cute stuff, so her eyes shone. She sounded pleased.

“You are too cute! You are very very cute!”

However, Maetel tackled the issue from a totally unexpected direction.

“Artpe, is Roa a female cat or a male cat?”

“She’s a female cat. Are you trying to compete even with a beast?”

“Grrrrrrrr.....”

[Nyaa.....]

When Maetel heard that the cat was female, she started growling. Maetel became guarded. Roa, who had to face Maetel’s hostility, was taken aback by it.

“She really is cute..... No, Artpe-nim! This isn’t the time to be doing this!”

There was a cordial atmosphere amongst the hero’s party. Mycenae couldn’t stand it, so she express her anger.

“Yes, yes. I’ll go out. I’m coming. Tsk.”

Artpe was lackadaisical as he got up. He put his robe around his body. No one instructed her to do so, but Roa entered into his robe out of her own accord. She hid atop his head.

It was the corpse of an enormous level 267 large monster. It was something rarely seen in the human world. Artpe felt depressed at the thought of facing the humans demonstrate their greed.

He got out of the bed first, then he waited for Maetel and Sienna to equip themselves. After they were done getting ready.....

“Artpe, I’m hungry.”

“Oppa~ I want to eat buttered corn.”

“All right. Let’s eat before we go.”

[Nyaa!]

“Ah ah! Really! Artep-niiiiim!”

They decided to go eat first.

“You are finally up?”

“We’ve been waiting for you, magician.”

It was as if they had been trying to eat all the meals they had missed for the past two days. They enjoyed their meals thoroughly before they went to the square. It seemed all the foreign nobles, nobles of Diaz, the lord of Frate and the merchants were all gathered here. If things went a little bit awry, a much dirtier and thicker greed compared to what was seen in the auction house yesterday would emanate from them.

“Wow. It looks really big seen in this light....burp.”

“You dummy, don’t speak and burp at the same time. Where did your dignity as a human go to?”

“It really is big. Oppa killed this. Oppa is too cool.”

Of course, they weren’t the only ones there. The Kraken was so large that he wondered how they moved the corpse inland. Moreover, the Kraken’s corpse had been kept intact. It was being guarded by an awe-inspiring number of guards..... Artpe was baffled by all of this, so he asked the lord a question.

“I’ve only killed the Kraken. The Lunatic Wave has started, so it won’t end until the winter ends. Is it ok for you all to be here doing nothing?”

“Since you’ve killed the Kraken, the size of the Wave has decreased. Two days has passed, yet the size of the Wave barely increased in size. We still have time. This is all thanks to you....”

“The more important thing right now is the Kraken!”

“Magician! We want to talk to you about divvying up the Kraken’s loot!”

“Koo-hmmm.....”

The foreign nobles were jumping up and down in excitement. The only one that was subdued amongst them was Frate’s lord, count Melard. He probably also coveted the Kraken’s corpse, but the defense of Frate was more important to him.

“Even if you don’t raise your voices, the magician will understand your words. Everyone should calm down, and we should wait for him to speak. This will allow us to do this quickly, and it’ll finish without any conflict.”

“How can I do that! These bastards are trying to steal my share of the Kraken through unfair reason!”

“Who are you accusing of theft? I acquired the share to the barrier wall through the merchant over there! I bought it with my

Magic Stones early on! I'm different from you guys, who held out giving the Magic Stones until the last moment. You only gave it up, because you didn't want to die!"

"Everyone should calm down! Aren't you ashamed of your behavior as nobles!"

"How can we calm down right now!"

This was why the count had remained here. If he vacated his post of watching over the corpse of the Kraken, he was worried a fight would have broken out. He was at a point where he wished the corpse of the Kraken would just disappear.

'Thankfully, the lord has a good head on his shoulders. If people like him didn't exist, the country would fall into ruins.'

Artpe shared a bitter laugh with the lord before he stepped forward. Everyone's attention was focused on him. He let out a deep sigh, and he looked over the Kraken's corpse. He had planned on talking about everyone's share after he made an accurate assessment of the worth of the Kraken's corpse.

'Huh.....'

However, he found an information that he hadn't been able to catch with his Read all Creation ability when the Kraken was alive. During the fight, he hadn't been focused on analyzing what was within its body. He had focused on its health and overall status of the Kraken. It was understandable as to how this had happened.

The Read All Creation was a god-like ability that allowed it to discern all information that could be seen through his eyes. However, there was a limit on how much information Artpe could receive and process. This was why he had trained his ability to show him information on topics he was focused on.

In conclusion, he had done a thorough search of the Kraken's inner anatomy, and he was barely able to find an entity within it.

'Besides the fact that there is something within it..... It is still

alive? Moreover, this being belongs to the race of..... Wait a moment. This smells like another Quest.....’

He had thought he had nothing to hide. Greed Beast Roa had looted the Kraken once already. The only thing that could be gained from the Kraken was its big body. Of course, the parts of its body were useful, but it wasn’t anything he coveted. This was why he had been ready to give away most of it after he gathered the important items..... However, the story had changed once he found ‘another possibility’ within its corpse.

“All right. I am a magician that is second to none in this world in terms of fairness. I’ll make my verdict now. My three man party will take 50% of the loot.”

“You want 50%?! That is too high!?”

“Artpe-nim! You only want 50 percent.....”

If one was being frank, the hero party had done everything in this fight. Five hundred magic stones was worth an enormous amount, yet the Reinforcement of the barrier wall couldn’t have been done without him. Moreover, Sienna and Maetel wouldn’t have been there. The barrier wall wouldn’t have been used to defeat the Kraken.

He had every right to take the entire corpse for himself, so he was being generous by announcing his 50% cut. Of course, the generosity was influenced by the fact that Roa had already looted the Kraken.

A portion of nobles couldn’t hide their anger and discontent. They were barely able to keep their cool, but the nobles started making snide comments. Artpe snorted as he spoke in a disinterested manner.

“Next, there is the merchant that played a huge role in making the barrier wall, which blocked the Kraken. Mycenae’s share is 20%.”

“That merchant tried to cheat us out of our items, yet you are giving her a 20% cut! Are you out of your mind!”

“If this particular merchant wasn’t here, we would have all died. So shut the hell up!”

At Artpe’s rough rebuke, the nobles shut their mouths.

Since Artpe wasn’t a noble, they couldn’t bend him to their wills through political pressure. He was also a powerful magician, so they couldn’t subdue him through violence. If Artpe had tried to coerce them all through his magic, they could have shouted with righteous anger. They could have invoked the name of their countries. However, Artpe was speaking as the most accomplished combatant in this battle. He also spoke about the contributions made by the other people in battle. There was nothing they could gain by raising their voices.

“Then there are the nobles and merchants of Diaz, who provided 180 Magic Stones for the construction of the barrier wall. They sold it at a ‘cheap’ price. I believe 20% share is fair for them. The rest will take the 10% share. These are the foreign nobles and merchants, who paid 320 Magic Stones, in exchange for the right to be protected. That is it. Are there any objections?”

“T...ten percent..... You want us to share 10 percent amongst the 100 of us? Y...you bastaaaaaaaard!”

The noble couldn’t stand it any longer, so he unsheathed his sword. He pointed his sword at Artpe. However, neither Maetel and Sienna stepped forward to help Artpe. They knew how much strength and martial force he possessed.

Artpe’s eyebrows twitched as he looked over the noble.

“I split it up fairly. Do you have a problem with it?”

“How is this fair! I’ve never experienced meeting such an obstinate person! I gave up three Magic Stones, and I want a fair compensation!”

“You should speak the whole truth. You’ve already received a fair compensation.”

Artpe extended his hand to grab the sword. The Mana Strings erupted like vines as it climbed up the sword. The Mana Strings reached the man’s neck. The nobleman couldn’t see the Mana Strings, but he could feel the pressure caused by them. He squeaked as his body tensed.

“I’m talking about your life. The rest is just a bonus. Am I not right?”

“Y...you bastard.... You dare to threaten a marquis of the Diatin Kingdom!”

“I’m pretty sure you were the one to threaten me first. I’m pretty sure we made a clean transaction, yet you are going back on the terms of the deal. You are trying to double dip. If that isn’t a form of threat, what is?”

“T...that wasn’t a fair trade.....”

When he added strength into the Mana String, the nobles sword broke cleanly. The bastard finally realized that he was facing someone with unfathomable abilities. He finally realized this fact.

“If you don’t like the price you paid for your life, I can take it all back. Shall we settle our account after nullifying our previous agreement? I’m ready to do so.”

Artpe was trying to prevent more annoying incidents from occurring. He spoke as he gathered his Mana. The noble’s face paled.

“M...my country won’t allow....”

“Do you really think that your northern country will be able to find me? No.... If I decide to do something to you here, do you think I’ll leave behind any witnesses? You were shaking in fear behind the wall, while we killed the Kraken. It has only been two days, yet have you forgotten this fact?”

“Koo, kuh-huhk.....”

Artpe’s imposing presence was mounting. It was as if the Demon King’s Four Heavenly King had made his appearance. The murderous intent rose until it choked their throats. It was hard to breath in this atmosphere.

“Such fearsome Mana.....”

“He probably became much stronger after defeating the Kraken. He might be the strongest human in this world.....!”

No one there could say anything. They could only feel sorry for the marquis of the Diatin Kingdom, who was feeling the full brunt of Artpe’s killing intent. Nevertheless, Artpe spoke words that held more venom than before.

“I’m playing along with you guys, since I don’t want to create more annoying incidents. If I kill you, it will be inevitable. I will have to destroy your country at some point in time.so how do you want to play this? Are you going to create trouble for me?”

No one there could laugh off Artpe’s words as a lie. They believed that Artpe was capable of destroying a nation. This was also true for the marquis of the Diatin Kingdom.

“N...no. I...I’m not going to”

“What about you guys?”

The nobles and merchants had been showing a bold front until a moment ago, yet they avoided meeting Artpe’s gaze right now. When he saw this, Artpe felt truly appalled by it.

If they knew they were going to end things like this, why did they all raise their voices? Why did they have to force Artpe to growl and show off his power? This was why he considered humans to be no better than dogs. However, it was also true that Artpe had humored them, and he played on their level. Artpe was the same as them. He was also pathetic.

Still, he had to continue this pathetic farce to achieve his goal.

“All right. Since we’ve concluded our discussion, let us start distributing it. Since we no longer need to guard the corpse, you should quickly send the guards to the 2nd tier barrier wall. Those with no claims to the corpse of the Kraken should also go. You should be vigilant against the murderous intent of the monsters, not the greed of humans.”

“I...I understand!”

“Understood, magician-nim!”

The square became quiet. There were greedy people still present, yet no one had the fortitude to reveal their greed.

“Let us start the looting.”

“Y...yes sir.”

The marquis of Diatan couldn’t withstand Artpe’s killing intent, so he had pissed his pants. Artpe discarded him, and he approached the Kraken’s corpse. As he approached it, he gave orders to Roa in a low voice.

[When I mess with the corpse, I want you to play along by pouring out the worthless items.]

[Nyaa-ahhhh.]

Artpe messed with the Kraken. Roa opened her mouth.

The collaboration between the master and servant was perfect.

Chapter 67 - The Quest Isn't Done Yet (2)

When Artpe started going through the motion of looting the corpse, Roa followed her master's directions. She spat out a massive number of items. She had worked hard to gather all these items, so she felt aggrieved. There were unshed tears in her purple eyes.

This was for the benefit of the people gathered around the Kraken. It looked as if the Kraken was pouring out Artifacts thanks to Artpe's looting.

"T...there are so many of them!?"

"Huh? I've seen this spear from somewhere before....."

"It was said that the Kraken swallowed whole ships that sank to the bottom of the ocean. I'm sure there are numerous weapons from each kingdom mixed in there."

Since the items from the auction house were mixed within the pile, it was reasonable to make such an assumption. However, as expected of a highly intelligent magical beast, Roa taken out all the unremarkable items. She was able to accurately gauge the amount of curse energy and evil energy within the items. This was why she was able regurgitate the items that were considered to be unremarkable. The sense of disharmony between the humans quickly dissipated.

"However... Mmmmmmm."

"Shit.... My three Magic Stones came back as shit!"

It was a legendary monster that was over level 250. The Kraken had been the tyrant of the ocean, yet the loot looked extremely ordinary. They couldn't help but let out a sigh. It was to be expected. Roa had eaten all the corrupt energy within the items.

"Are there any Artifacts that was newly formed through the Kraken's Record and Mana?!"

“I guess not. Shit. I heard this happens sometimes. Why did it have to occur at this moment!”

“Maybe, this is a blessing in disguise. Even if such items existed, it would have ended in the hands of the magician. We would have been unable to do anything about it.”

Artpe had been worried Roa might have spat out something of high value. His eyes were fierce as he looked over the items. However, there was no way Roa would make a mistake. She had executed her task flawlessly. She was so thorough that Artpe wondered if it would have been better if she had spat out more items.

“This should be enough to cover your share. You guys can take it and divvy it up.”

“No, I think I’d rather want the Kraken’s corpse than these items....”

“What? You want me to take weapons and equipments that’s useless to a magician? Or are you trying to say you find equipments of my companions lacking?”

“It isn’t like that...”

When Artpe put some strength behind his glare, the noble quickly shrank into himself. Artpe was acting like a gangster, but since they didn’t know the specifics of what Artpe had done, they were unable to argue with him!

“Your share will be covered by this spear. You can have this shield.....”

“How.... How can this be! How! This can’t be possible! Why!”

“If I knew these items would drop, I wouldn’t have given up my Magic Stones.... Shit!”

This was how the merchandise that were submitted by the nobles and merchants were returned to them as their share of the loot.

The weapons and items were clean. There were no curses or evil energy imbued within them. No further troubles would arise from this! Mycenae already knew what was up. The white of her eyes were displayed as she mumbled to herself.

“This was why Artpe-nim said those words towards me earlier.....”

“The Kraken’s corpse solely belongs to my party and Mycenae. People, who received their shares, should join the front line. Even if you are foreigners, you entered into the Diaz Kingdom, so you all have obligations to help out against the Lunatic Wave. I’m sure you are aware of that fact?”

“There still might be something left within the Kraken’s corpse!”

“So what if something remains within it?”

Artpe smirked as he questioned the nobel.

“What are you going to do about it? You qualify for 1/1000 share of the loot, so what right do you have to make such a demand?”

“I...I’ll go to the barrier wall.”

“Artpe is too cool.....”

Artpe was successful in chasing off the nobles and merchants. If he took the entire Kraken for himself, they would have become suspicious. This was why he used his Mana Strings to slowly remove the tentacles. He was working on the 20% of the Kraken he would have to give to Mycenae.

Mycenae looked worried as she watched the humans leave. They were grinding their teeth in frustration. She grabbed his sleeve.

“Artpe-nim, it is truly satisfying to see you act this way, but it also means Diaz won’t be able to avoid the backlash....”

“You are probably right. They can’t do anything to me, so that’ll pick on people they will have better odds against. They’ll lodge complaints against the nobles of Diaz.”

“I see. You are right.”

“This will lessen the influence of the nobles, and it would give the puppet king some breathing room. Even if the nobles try to lessen the damage by shifting the blame to the puppet king, the result will be the same. Either the nobles will get weaker or the puppet king will become weaker. It is an either-or situation. In either case, it’ll help Silpennon recover his kingdom later on.”

“.....”

Mycenae received an unexpected answer, so she was at a loss for words. She hadn’t the faintest idea as to how far ahead Artpe was thinking about. Of course, Artpe wasn’t thinking too seriously about his answer! He was just noting the fact that it wouldn’t be too bad if things turned out like that.

“I’ll cut them up for you roughly at this size. I’m sure I don’t need to explain to you on how to process a Kraken?”

“Artpe-nim seems to know everything.”

“I don’t know everything. I just know what I know. I’m pretty sure I told you this before.”

Mycenae’s share was quite generous. She was given half of the tentacles, and a good amount of the Kraken’s body was carved out for her. It was more than enough for the Anywhere company to celebrate her return. The only problem was the fact that she still had to haul this big body parts back.

“I heard the body could be used as ingredient to create a Mana reagent. It can also be used to make nutritious tonics. It is the part of the body with the most use.”

“However, the most coveted part is the tentacles.”

Roa had absorbed all the curses and the Demonic gene, so the Kraken had been weakened. Still, a Kraken was a Kraken.

The tentacles became tougher in death. Each tentacle had tens of

thousands of suction cups, and hooks on the surface. The tentacles were frightening. Many weapons could be made with just one tentacle. Amongst all the weapons that could be made, the most famous one was a whip made from the Kraken's tentacle.

“There are parts we can sell from the head. You can look forward to that. Ah, you should give up on the ink. I'm going to use it.”

Artpe knew he was very lucky. The Kraken had been gripped with madness, so it wouldn't have been strange to see the Kraken swivel its head in all directions to spray its ink. He didn't know if the Kraken liked to fight only with its body or if it was unable to expel any of its curse. The Kraken hadn't used its ink during the battle. It either rammed the wall with its body or it swung its tentacles.

“This is the Kraken's ink? I've never heard of it.”

“I can see why. It is usually used for curse magic. Moreover, there's also the fact that not many people survive an encounter with a Kraken to spread such information.”

“E...even if you want to sell it to me, I won't buy it!”

Maybe this was the aftereffect of what had gone on in Frate. Just the mention of curses made her face turn deathly pale. Mycenae's ears fluttered as she backed away. He cackled when he saw this.

He changed the subject.

“Actually, it isn't only used with curses. It is used in creating high rank magic books. A massive amount of pure Mana was infused deeply within the ink through the years, so a Magician could easily create a magic book with this ingredient. These magic books won't be absorbed into one's Record after reading it once. It's like the Demite Gemstone. It absorbs Record to evolve. It support the Magician as it becomes enriched.”

“That has nothing to do with curses! Eeek. You are making fun of the trauma I suffered……!”

Mycenae's body and ears trembled from the indignation she felt. Artpe cackled once again when he saw this. Maetel was watching Artpe from behind him. There was a slightly withdrawn look in her eyes.

“Artpe, let's hurry up and take what is ours. Then we can go rest. I have something I want to talk to you about.”

“.....Maetel, your voice sounds a bit scary.”

“I'm just too tired right now. I'll become better soon if you are by my side. If you are near me....”

“Your voice just turned scarier.....”

Artpe lost his nerve at the odd energy coming from her. He could no longer open his mouth. Mycenae also felt as if she would be murdered by Maetel if she remained here. Under such fears, she called forth the staff from her company. She quickly ran away after she gathered everything she could gather.

The butchering of the Kraken continued. There were still some people left. These particular humans still held lingering attachment towards the Kraken, so they had remained to watch.

However, they soon realized Artpe was just butchering the Kraken. There was nothing new that could be gained from the Kraken. They had no choice but to leave. This was how Artpe passed the time as he waited for everyone to disappear from this place.

However, the lord of Frate continued to wait until the end. It was quite unexpected.

“From what I've seen of you, I thought you would be the first to run to the top of the barrier wall.”

Artpe paused from his task of butchering the Kraken, and he spoke towards the lord. As if he had been waiting for this, the lord nodded his head as he spoke.

“Of course, the Lunatic Wave is important. However, I thought this would be the only time I would be able to talk to you.”

When he heard those words, Artpe paused for a brief moment. It was imperceptible. Artpe commended the lord inside for figuring that out, but his outer appearance remained calm.

“What are you talking about? I’m in the same boat as you. I can’t get out of here until winter.”

“Is that so? I got the impression that you were going to leave immediately. That is why I wanted to express my thanks before that happened. Even if you aren’t leaving soon, I’ll give you a token of my appreciation. Thank you.”

The lord spoke those words as he pushed a small pouch towards Artpe. The pouch was imbued with fairly deep magic. It was none other than a Dimensional Pouch..

“I would have liked to have repaid you with a better item, yet this is all I have left. Still, in terms of how much it can hold and its ability to reduce weight, it was evaluated to be the best in this country. It should have plenty of space to put in the Kraken.”

Artpe had been listening half-heartedly to the lord’s explanation as he took the item. His eyes turned round in surprise. He couldn’t help it.

“What the.... You weren’t exaggerating. This really is an amazing treasure.”

Dimensional Pouches were somewhat common. However, when one tried to find the better functioning Dimensional Pouches, the price increase was very steep. Then there were the ones that couldn’t be bought with money. This pouch was part of the collection of items that were made by Archmages from the distant past.

If a Dimensional Pouch was able to contain the incredibly large Kraken, which was several hundred meters in length, it was well

beyond the realm of being a normal Dimensional Pouch.!

“You know you will be taking losses from the result of my actions, yet you are giving me such a precious item.....?”

“Loss?”

The lord smirked at Artpe’s reply. He looked at Artpe with kind eyes as he spoke.

“Countless lives within the city were saved, because of you. When I think about the weight of the blood and tears that could have been on my shoulders, I can laugh off any threats those bastards can come up with.”

“.....”

He hadn’t expected such a great response from the lord. Artpe became silent. In his past life, he had seen a lot of hypocrisy and pretense from humans. This was why he knew the lord was speaking the truth.

‘Yes, I saw so many disgusting humans that I forgot about people like him. They are very small in number, but there really are humans like him in this world.’

It felt as if he was hit on the head. When he was faced with the endlessly selfish humans, he had fought fire with fire. He acted only in his own interest as a response. This was why this sudden attack by the lord had hit its mark.

“You.....”

The lord wasn’t done. He continued to speak.

“We truly fell short. We made such a foolish mistake by trying to protect the wrong things. We were able to avoid an irreversible calamity thanks to you. However, it seems humans are creatures that can’t help but make the same mistake over and over again. We once again showed such crude behaviors in front of you..... Still, I want to make sure that you know this truth. There are a lot of

people out there that are of of like mind as me.”

In his past life, Artpe had lived for several hundred years. This human had lived not even one fifth that number, yet he was able to see through Artpe. Artpe felt he still had a long way to go. He couldn't stop his laughter from coming out.

A crinkle started to form at the edges of the lord's eyes. The lord's intelligent eyes reflected his years of experience. He looked straight at Artpe as he brought his words to a close.

“We know the worth of what you have done. We cannot do what you can do, but there are many people out there that respect what you have done. Please continue to help the other humans. I know you are disappointed in humanity, but there will come a day when you will find hope from humanity. I truly believe this.”

“Hah…….”

It was a complete defeat.

However, it didn't feel too bad.

Artpe took the Dimensional Pouch being offered. He nodded his head as if it couldn't be helped.

“I'm just one human. The fact that I become disillusioned and disappointed by humanity doesn't mean it'll greatly affect the human world..... All right, lord. I'll be sure to remember your words.”

“It is very fortunate that you think so.”

The lord was past being middle-aged, and he was at the cusp of entering his latter years. When he saw the spite within Artpe's eyes lessen by a small amount, he let out a truly bright laughter. Artpe was strangely embarrassed when faced with the lord's smile. He snorted as he turned his gaze away. However, words that didn't match the expression on his face leaked out.

“I will be leaving soon, but.... It was my fault for destroying the

reinforced barrier wall. I'll reconstruct the first barrier wall."

"No, the barrier wall was used to defeat the Kraken. It was done out of necessity. Moreover, the place where the 1st barrier wall stood is filled with water and monsters now....."

"Do you really think that'll be a problem for me?"

".....no, it won't be a problem. Then I'll head to the frontline ahead of you. I'll say this again. Thank you very much."

The lord had already seen what Artpe could do. The lord laughed as he expressed his thanks once again. He headed towards the frontline where the humans and monsters were confronting each other. He didn't turn around to look at Artpe.

Artpe's 3-man party was the only ones left there.

"Are we going to leave this place too, Artpe?"

"We'll have to finish butchering this bastard."

The work he had to do right now had to be done away from prying eyes. However, he had received a special tool. He didn't really need to stay here.

He put the entire Kraken within his pouch. The pouch remained light. He grinned in satisfaction as he turned to look at his party.

"All right. Let's go receive our next Quest."

"Quest!?"

The Kraken had fulfilled its role, and it exited the stage in an ignominious manner.

It was time to to meet the new character that would appear from within its stomach. A new stage would be set.

Chapter 68 - The Quest Isn't Done Yet (3)

The humans were in a heated battle at the port. They were trying to stop the advance of monsters that were coming out from the ocean. No one was the wiser when they left the city to head towards the mountain. No, there would be one person within the city, who would notice. Etna knew he had left, but she didn't follow after the party. It seemed she was going to behave by waiting at the inn.

“I think we are far enough.”

When he reached a large clearing, Artpe took out the corpse of the Kraken from his Dimensional Pouch. He had taken off a lot of parts for Mycenae, yet the corpse was still enormous. After butchering the tentacles and body of the Kraken, the corpse was at a size where the dissection of the corpse wouldn't be too great of a challenge.

“We are almost done with the body..... All right. Let's put that aside for now.”

“You are going to use it on the barrier wall? Right, Artpe?”

Artpe couldn't help but laugh at Maetel's sharp insight. For some reason, she became unusually smart regarding any work related to Artpe.

“That right. I'm going to dry the Kraken's body, and I will grind it into fine powder. It'll become a great ingredient that will allow me to Reinforce various materials.”

“As expected, Artpe is too kind.”

“I'm just trying to restore the barrier wall, so they can't use it as a talking point against me.”

No one believed the bullshit Artpe was spouting. Artpe simultaneously activated several magic as he spoke. He let out fire, wind and Mana Strings. He dried the body of the Kraken, and he

minced it into fine powder. After putting away the powder inside his Dimensional Pouch, the only part left was the Kraken's head.

“Hoo-oo..... Let's do this.”

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that the head was the most important part of the Kraken. Artpe let out his Mana Strings, and his movement became more careful.

“First, I'm going to split open its head, and I have to carefully extract the ink sac.”

“The sac is pretty small compared to the enormous size of the Kraken.”

“If the sac is capable of producing a lot, it doesn't have to be large. Here it is.....”

Then he added something special to it. It was something only Artpe could do. He Reinforced it. He Reinforced it twice, and the ink sac went through a transformation. Its size decreased to a point where Artpe could hold it with one hand. Of course, the ink within the sac was also Reinforced.

However....

“Huh..”

“What's wrong, Artpe?”

He had a hunch that he would be able to Reinforce it one more time. When he had this feeling, he tilted his head in puzzlement. Normally, he was able to Reinforce an item once or twice. It was a limit that couldn't be surpassed without the support of ingredients like the Magic Stones.

‘Did my skill evolve thanks to the fight with the Kraken?’

It was as he suspected. He had to rampantly use his Reinforcement skill in the fight against the Kraken, and it allowed him to acquire some kind of an Achievement. When his EXP was being tallied, his Reinforcement skill had grown.

As a result of this venture, Artpe's Reinforcement skill had reached level 51. When he arrived at Frate, his skill level had been 43. He had gone through an amazing burst of growth.

No, the skill level wasn't the important part right now. The important part was the fact that he could use Reinforcement three times on his party's equipment without the need of Magic Stones.

"Hey, you guys should come here too."

"Yes!"

Artpe immediately Reinforced the ink sac. Then he Reinforced his boots and the other equipments of his party members in one fell swoop. The effect was amazing. His boots had already boasted cheat-like abilities, but the equipments of his companions were close to reaching its shelf-life. Their equipments were perfectly restored, and they had evolved into something better. He was satisfied with the result.

"Oppa! Oppa! The hammer can store and release vibration now!"

"Finally, the true power of that metal type will be revealed.."

"Wow. I can shoot my Beam twice in a row!"

"Yes, let's just call your move as the Beam from now on."

If he had his way, he wanted to Reinforce the Demite Gemstone. However, the Demite Gemstone had a sense of self, so it was like trying to Reinforce a person. It was impossible to do for now. However, it also meant that he would be able to Reinforce it some day in the future.....

'I'll worry about it when I reach that point. The more important thing right now is in front of my eyes.'

Artpe shook his head from side to side as he stopped churning his thoughts. The completed ink sac was the perfect size for portability. He hung it inside his robe. Even if the Kraken slammed its body into him, Artpe's bones would be crushed, but the ink sac

wouldn't burst open. Aside from the ink sac, most of the remaining organs became food for Roa. He gave her parts like the liver. These were organs that possessed strong Mana, yet it was poisonous for human consumption.

[Nyaa, nyaaaaaa.]

“All right. Since you are going to eat all of this, you have to spit out the other items later on.”

[Nyaaa.]

The loot given to the nobles were fake. The true Artifacts containing the Kraken's Record and Mana was within Roa's stomach.

It seemed the innards of the Kraken prepared by Artpe was pretty good. Roa didn't think too much on it as she readily nodded her head. Artpe scratched the underside of her chin as he continued the butchering.

After a short amount of time had passed, the head was completely dismantled. The only thing left was its enormous stomach. When she looked over it, Maetel's eyes turned round.

“Artpe, there's something alive inside!”

“You should unsheathe your sword. Be ready.”

“.....yes.”

The meaning behind Artpe's words were simple to discern.. There was a living being inside the Kraken's stomach, and it was a monster. Maetel didn't dig too deep into the subject. She unsheathed and gripped her sword.

“All right. Here I go.”

When Artpe confirmed that she was ready, he controlled his Mana Strings to carefully split open the stomach.

From within it, a beauty with dazzling white skin and ocean-colored hair appeared.

“Koo-ooh…… Hoo-oohk…….”

She had a very distressed complexion, and she was gasping for air. There was no vitality or magical energy remaining within her body. She would have died within a day or two if she had remained inside the Kraken.

Moreover, the Demonic gene had invaded deep into her body……. It was obvious that she had been a sacrificial lamb for the Demonification experiment. It wasn't a coincidence that she was inside the Kraken's stomach. No, if he considered the worst case scenario, she had been allowed to be swallowed by the Kraken as part of the experiment. This might all be interconnected.

“Eeeeeeeeeek!”

However, Maetel didn't care about the deep implications of all of this. She didn't care about the condition of the woman. The only thing that mattered was the fact that the woman was naked. Maetel grinded her teeth in anger as she pointed her sword at Artpe.

“Now I will use this sword on Artpe's eyes!”

“Calm down. I didn't rescue her, because she's a woman!”

“Unni, this monster is suffering under the same symptoms as me. I'm sure oppa was able to identify this.”

“Oohk.”

She was barely able to put away her sword when she heard Sienna's words. Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he spoke.

“Mermaids possess above average intelligence compared to other normal monsters. If I'm able to converse with her, I can acquire information from her. This is why I'm trying to keep her existence a secret. That is the reason why I'm trying to save her.”

“What are you going to do after you extract the information? ……Will you kill her afterwards?”

Maetel had once declared that all monsters were her enemies since they all did bad things. However, it seemed she didn't have the courage to point her sword towards a mermaid groaning from weakness. Artpe was inwardly relieved by this fact. He shook his head from side to side.

"I won't kill anyone that will help me. I'll make a similar arrangement as the one I made with Deyus, so you don't have to worry about it."

"Yes, I understand. However, it would be great if we can clothe her as soon as possible."

"Jeez. She's a monster."

"However, her body is amazing! This isn't good for Artpe's eyes!"

It was true that she was a monster, but the mermaid looked exactly like a human on the outside. It did feel weird to stare at her naked body. Artpe quickly placed a cloth over her naked body.

[Nyaa?]

"Yes, you know your stuff. I'll leave it to you."

Roa sensed that it was her turn, so she trotted off of Artpe's shoulder. She hopped onto the mermaid's stomach, and she opened her mouth wide.

[Nyaaaaaaaaahng.]

That was all she needed to do. The Demonic gene, which was dominating the mermaid, was sucked into Roa's mouth. It was a clean extraction. Artpe knew she possessed this talent, yet he couldn't help but be surprised when he witnessed it in action.

"I'm glad that the Chaos Egg absorbed the Obsidian of Greed...."

"It really is an absurd ability. If we had Roa from the beginning, neither I nor oppa would have suffered."

At one point, Sienna had been in the same situation as the mermaid. She had been reborn as an Evil Reflector through Artpe's

hands. It seemed the sight of the all of this was leaving behind a fairly deep impression on Sienna.

If she hadn't become an Evil Reflector, she wouldn't have had to live a life full of battles. Was she sad about this fact? Artpe had such thoughts for the first time as he watched Sienna. She was always laughing, so he might be under a misconception. Maybe she.....

“However, I'm able to travel with oppa and unni thanks to what happened. I prefer my current situation, oppa.”

“Are you learning mind reading skill with Maetel?”

“Heh heh.”

He couldn't even have his own thoughts around his party members. Artpe grumbled as he retrieved Roa. She let out a playful yawn. She had completely disposed of the curses and Demonic gene that had been dominating the mermaid's body.

Aside from the weakened state of the mermaid's body, she was fine. Basically, she went from a critically fatal state to a normal fatal state.

“Sienna.”

“Yes.”

Sienna put down her hammer, and she approached the mermaid. Sienna extended a hand towards the mermaid. Her warm magical energy flowed into the mermaid's body. The mermaid immediately opened her eyes, which was ocean blue. It was the same color as her hair. She let out a groan.

“Koo-hoohk, hoohk?”

Artpe let out a bitter laugh as he opened his mouth. The words that flowed out of his mouth wasn't the language of the humans. It was the language of the monsters. It was specifically a language that would allow him to communicate with underwater monsters

like the mermaid.

[You regained consciousness in one go. Since the Demonic gene was fostered within you, you should be in pain right now. However, your body is being purified right now, so you should endure it.]

“Kahk, keh-hoohk!”

How great would it be if one could endure pain just because someone told one to endure it? Sienna’s magical energy spread towards the entirety of the mermaid’s body. It bolstered her vitality, and her wounds were being healed. However, the mermaid couldn’t endure the pain of the healing process, so she screamed continuously.

It might have been better if she hadn’t regained consciousness. She suffered, because she had immediately regained consciousness. Fortunately, Sienna’s Mana was specialized. She was able to bolster the magic within the mermaid. She was able to finish the healing in short order.

“Kah-oohk, hee-koo-ah-oooooh…….”

Sienna took back her hand, and she backed away. Her treatment was finished, yet it seemed the mermaid was still in the throes of pain. She intermittently let out a moan as she crawled up into a ball.

There were tears in her pure eyes, and one could see fear towards the humans surrounding her. Artpe shook his head as he spoke to her.

[You’ll be fine now. The wounds, curses and Demonic gene are no more. You won’t die if you obey my words.]

It was such a sinister statement that he would have been worthy if he was chosen to be the Demon King. The slender mermaid shook in fear when she heard his words. If Maetel was able to understand his words, she would have been angry with him.

Unfortunately, she didn't know the language of the monsters.

However, the answer that was given by the mermaid was unexpected.

[I...I understand. You rescued me from overwhelming danger. I'll will serve you as my master.]

[Huh?ah. So that's how it is.]

Even amongst the humans, there was a debate as to whether mermaids were monsters or a kindred species. They were one of the races where the opinions were split.

When the Luatic Wave approached, they lost some of their sense of reason. They appeared alongside the normal monsters to fight the humans. This was why the popular opinion was that the mermaids were monsters. However, they were also unique in the fact that mermaids of high intelligence were able to escape the effects of the Lunatic Wave.

Moreover, the ones with the high intelligence were famous for repaying their debts no matter the cost. If the debt was small, they repaid the debt through gems from the ocean. If the debt was large, they dedicated their lives to the person they were beholden to. They became subservient.

‘Normally, people interact with mermen and mermaids as enemies. Therefore, it is very hard for them to incur a big enough debt where they will dedicate their lives to you. This rarely happened in history.’

If Maetel found out about this, it would become a huge headache. Maetel didn't care if she was a monster or not. Maetel considered all pretty female to be potential enemies..... Still, he had saved her with the aim to mine information from her. He would just release her from her debt after things resolved itself somewhat.

Artpe easily turned the page of his thoughts as he spoke to her.

[You probably have a decent idea of what this mess is all about.

I'll get straight to the point. Someone purposefully got close to you guys, and a curse was spread amongst you all. Am I right?]

[Yes, someone did do that.]

[Why were you inside the Kraken's belly?]

[The bastard captured me, and he gave me to the Kraken as food. The Kraken was too powerful to control through brute force. This was why they placed a curse on me, and the curse was passed onto the Kraken when it ate me.]

Mmm. As expected, these were sons of bitches of the highest order. Artpe nodded in a solemn and dignified manner as he queried her.

[Is he still within the ocean?]

[He is still there. He has taken over the deep sea mermaid kingdom of Anaid. He is making the curses there.]

[Do you know his name?]

[I do. He is a man named Madelrude.]

When he heard her answer, he felt a sense of incongruity. He tilted head in puzzlement. He had heard this name before. Soon, he came up with the answer.

“Medelrude was the name of the previous duke of Diaz.....?”

He realized the truth that he hadn't finished his first Quest yet. Artpe was barely at to realize this fact.

Chapter 69 - The Quest Isn't Done Yet (4)

He immediately gathered all the information he needed to know from the mermaid. Then he took off his own camouflage artifact. He put it on the mermaid. (Maetel once again became enraged at this gesture.) After he somewhat disguised her identity, he gave her a skirt and an adequate top for her to wear. Then he returned to the city with her.

Of course, the Lunatic Wave was still going on, so the streets of the city was as quiet as ever. Everyone was trying to survive until the end of the Lunatic Wave, so they had changed their way of life.

“Fortunately, there aren’t any people here that’ll make a fuss after seeing you.”

[Human clothes are uncomfortable.]

[Endure it until we reach a place with no human eyes.]

[Understood.]

A mermaid’s lower body turned into that of a fish when one was underwater. However, when one came out to dry land, the mermaid’s lower body naturally turned into human legs. The mermaid became bipedal.

Even if mermaids were capable of walking on two legs, human clothes were incredibly uncomfortable to them. The mermaid was restless as she kept grabbing and letting go of her skirt.

[Do you perhaps have a name?]

[I do. My name is Sheryll Anaid. For your convenience, you can just call me Sheryll.]

[All right. You probably won’t have any occasions to call me by my name, but my name is Artpe..... Wait a moment. Did you just say Anaid?]

He reacted way too late. Artpe had been trying to foster a friendly

atmosphere by exchanging each other's names. However, something about her name had caught his attention, and he furrowed his brows.

[Didn't you just say the mermaid kingdom was called Anaid?]

[That is correct. I am the 37th Queen of the Anaid Kingdom.]

They were like fishes. Their population number was incredibly high. Fortunately for Artpe, Sheryll wasn't the future Queen, so he hoped there wouldn't be any complications. As he had these thoughts, he opened the door to the inn, and he led her in.

“So that's what I did to the Kraken.....”

“Give me one more beer! I still can't forget that bastard's face.....”

“Hey, innkeeper!”

It was as if the quiet street outside had been a lie. The 1st floor of the inn was crowded with people. Soldiers that were finished with their shifts on the barrier wall were inside the inn. Then there were the mercenaries that were quickly called into the city. There were even merchants from other countries present there.

Artpe didn't want to fault these men, who were boasting as they drank alcohol. If one thought about the endless stream of Lunatic Wave in the near future, it was good for them to rest and let off steam like this. When the next shift on the wall was relieved, the inns and pubs would continue to be busy.

“Uh. Look over there.....”

“It's a woman.”

“My eyes just brightened. She brightens up my eyes.”

Artpe's party had entered in the midst of such men. They glossed over the presence of Artpe, but the atmosphere clearly changed when they saw the women, who followed in behind him. It wasn't just a single woman. Three beautiful women had come in.

Two of them looked young, and they were equipped with imposing weapons. The ratio of men to women was incredibly high inside the inn, so they became the focus of the men.

“What about them◆?”

“Hey, you better avert your eyes. You’ll follow my advice if you don’t want to die!”

However, everyone quietly retracted their gazes from them.

First, they remembered the sight of Maetel and Sienna fighting each other in the square. They had been incredibly scary. Secondly, they had crushed and cut down the Demons, who had mowed down the humans as if they were stalks of wheat. Lastly, the person that stopped the Kraken was here. The monster would have devoured Frate and the entirety of Diaz if he hadn’t been here. Everyone here knew the face of the young magician, who possessed incredible amount of magical energy.

“For him, I might.....”

“I can see why the two of them were fighting over him.”

“I heard he has a dirty personality. My employer grinded his teeth with vexation because of him.”

“Shut up, you idiot!”

Artpe completely ignored all the idiots gathered here as he approached the counter. There was a woman working behind the counter. She was working the counter instead of the innkeeper. The innkeeper was delivering food, but he quickly retook his position. He greeted Artpe.

“Wow. You are back! You are a magician!”

“I’m not here for anything important. I’ve added another party member, so I want to ask you if I have any additional fees I have to pay.....?”

“All I can say is that I’m jealous of you! Shit! You already gained

one more woman in such a short span of time! Moreover, she is very pretty!”

The innkeeper was brutally honest! Of course, his reaction would change if he found out that Sheryll was a monster. Still, it was pretty entertaining to see the innkeeper’s vexation, so he let it be.

“So should I give you more money or not?”

“You are taking all of them into the same room as if it is all in the day’s work.... No, I don’t need it! If you are able to sleep comfortably within such a small room, I don’t care if you bring three or five women! Do as you want! You can sleep with them all there!”

“I get it, so stop crying while you speak.....”

The innkeeper suddenly grabbed Artpe’s hand. He spoke with sincere eyes.

“I heard you were the magician that killed the Kraken. Thank you for protecting our city. Yes, if it is, you deserve it.....! Please fulfill my dream in my stead! You can fulfill my fantasy of having enough wives to fill up a villa....”

“You are being really creepy. Can you let go of my hand?”

The inn keeper had met a lucky adventurer, who would be able fulfill his dream. It seemed he was in a good mood. The innkeeper declared in a generous manner.

“Eh-eet! I’m in a good mood! I’ll provide dinner for you guys for free!”

“Since you are providing a free service, can you deliver it to our room?”

Delivery service was impossible, but it was possible to take out the food. Artpe took the buttered corn cobs, which were the specialty of this inn, and other hot foods to his room with his party members.

[Hoo-oooh.]

When they entered the room, they were free from the gazes of other people. This was why Sheryll immediately threw off her skirt. Maetel immediately launched herself towards Artpe, and Artpe swiftly dodged Maetel as he threw a cloth towards Sheryll. He praised himself, since he somehow managed not to upend the plates he was carrying.

[Cover yourself with this!]

[Understood]

After the suffocating and desperate struggle, the four of them settled into the room.

Maetel remained wary of Sheryll. Sienna hugged Roa, who had exited Artpe's hood. Unlike Maetel, who was wary of Roa for being a female cat, Sienna had taken a liking to Roa.

[.....are you sure that is edible?]

[Huh? You mean this? Try it.]

Sheryll's eyes were planted on the buttered corn cob. He wordlessly handed one over to her. Sheryll hadn't been fed properly, so her bony hands closed around the butter corn cob. She started to slowly gnaw on it.

[You should eat it slowly. You are healed, so you won't have any problems digesting the food. However, you aren't immune from a stomach ache..]

[Understood. Thank you very much.]

He spoke as he gave each party member a cob.

"You can call the mermaid as Sheryll from now on. She'll be with us until the Quest ends. She will 'only' be with us until the Quest ends.... She is a monster, but she won't oppose us. You can be at ease."

"Quest..... That horrible curse is spreading inside the ocean,

oppa?”

“The archduke is a bad man. That curse should never see the light of day again.”

He had been worried that they would focus on Sherryl. Fortunately, Sienna and Maetel was focused on the Quest. He nodded his head as he spoke.

“You already heard this from me, but the ones responsible for the demonification experiments are hiding underneath the ocean. This includes the archduke, and his remaining forces. He is probably with some Demons.....”

In the process of suppressing the archduke’s forces, Artpe had seen the work of the artifacts released by the Demon King’s army. He had suspected that the Demon King’s army wouldn’t let go of the archduke so easily. It seemed they had retrieved the archduke.

Madelrude was the ex-archduke, and he was a noncombatant. He took his remaining magicians, who had experimented with the curse, to the ocean. At the command of the Demon King’s army, he seized the mermaid kingdom of Anaid, and he had started spreading the curse.

“When he coveted the seat of monarchy after chasing out the previous king, I recognized what kind of man he was. You really get tired of facing someone like that.”

“I can never forgive him.”

“.....oppa, you are going to punish him?”

Both Maetel and Sienna had memories regarding the Demonification curse, so they couldn’t laugh about it. Blood, tears and death of countless people dwelled within their memories.

They had thought everything was resolved without them needing to attack the palace. That was why Artpe’s party had quickly went on their way. However, now that the archduke was in their way, there was no reason not to tidy up the loose end. Artpe bared his

teeth as he replied.

“Of course.”

In truth, he wasn't doing this just to carry out the Quest. Artpe bit into his own buttered corn cob as he spoke.

“If all of this hadn't occurred, we would have been on a boat by now. I've already told you that our destination is Aedia, right?”

“Yes. However, the Lunatic Wave.....”

“That's right. Basically, any travel across the ocean is blocked when a Lunatic Wave occurs. Since all ports are shut down, no ships can depart. However, that doesn't mean we can't cross the ocean. If we can't travel atop it, we can travel underneath it.”

“Underneath the ocean....? Ah.”

Sienna tilted her head in puzzlement, but her eyes turned round as she turned to look at Sherryl. She was still busy gnawing at the buttered corn cob, but her existence was a form of an answer.

“That's right. You said it was an underwater kingdom.”

“Yes, whether it is humans or monsters, the maintenance of roads is the first thing that has to occur when building a nation. I'm thinking about borrowing their road to cross to Aedia.”

He had never been to the mermaid kingdom, but he knew of their existence. Moreover, he knew that they had created an underwater passageway that was free from being attacked by other monsters. He had heard about this before.

However, he had no use for such roads in his past life, and if it was possible, he didn't want to use it in his current life. However, the path atop the ocean was block, and they had a reliable guide now. There was no reason for them to hesitate using the underwater road.

“So that's the main reason why oppa helped Sherryl. Ah, it will also be necessary for us to fight the bad guys in the process.”

“You are correct. Do you guys have a rough idea of what is going on?”

“Yes..”

[Hmm.... Mmm. Hmmm.]

The humans were talking about whether they should save the mermaid kingdom. It was unknown as to whether she could understand them. Sheryll was still focused on eating the corn cob. She had the look of a mature human woman, yet she was showing an innocent side of her. She possessed a subtle allure.

At that moment, Maetel whipped her head around towards Artpe.

“Artpehhhhh?”

“No, I wasn’t charmed by her. It’s the truth.”

Shit. He was sure these girls were using mind reading skills! Why couldn't he confirm it through his Read All Creation ability!

Artpe clicked his tongue. He turned his gaze away as if to avoid her interrogation. He thought about the fact that he didn’t have the time to play around here like this. He stood up from his seat as if the right moment had come.

“You guys should eat dinner then rest. We’ll head out tomorrow.”

[Nyaa.]

Roa had behaved herself until now as she remained in Sienna’s embrace. However, she jumped back into Artpe’s hood. Maetel pouted as she argued with Artpe.

“You are running away, because the topic got difficult.”

“What about oppa?”

“I have things I have to resolve in the city. I have to put up the barrier wall, and.... I have someone I have to meet.”

“When you say you have to meet someone....”

Maetel mumbled to herself as she repeated his words. The light in her eyes changed in a flash. Until now, she had the eyes of a wife worried about her husband cheating. However, her eyes currently held the look of a maiden trying to hold back her lover from heading into battle.

“Artpe, you can’t got with that woman. Okay?”

If Sienna had said this, he would have understood it since she had met Etna. Maetel hadn’t met her, yet she was somehow able to discern what was going on. This was the first thought that came into his mind.

“If you are so worried, you want to follow me?”

“.....no, I trust Artpe. Artpe said you don’t like older women, so I’ll believe in your words.”

Her face said that she didn’t believe her own words at all. Moreover, he had no idea how she found out Etna was an older woman. Artpe became a bit upset, but this was karma. He gently brushed Maetel’s head, who was looking at him with worried eyes. He wasn’t sure what was going through her head, but he wished his actions would calm her down.

“I’ll be back.”

“.....yes.”

“Don't stay out too late!”

Sherryl was still gnawing at the corn cob. Artpe smirked as he told Sherryl to wait for him here. Then he exited the room.

He started walking toward the Jaime’s Inn located in sector C.

Chapter 70 - The Quest Isn't Done Yet (5)

Jaime's inn should have been similar to the inn occupied by Artpe's party. However, the atmosphere inside the inn was subdued. Artpe opened the door to the inn. When he entered, he saw that every single person had their head buried in their table.

“.....what the hell?”

[Nyaa.]

Artpe surveyed his surrounding. He wonder if they were in mourning. A female waitress ran up to him, and she whispered to him.

“A man tried to make a pass on a pretty woman, and she.....”

The following story was something a normal male shouldn't hear if one wanted to maintain one's mental health.

Indeed, everyone was taking some time to extend their sympathy towards this man. Artpe also gave a short prayer. He prayed for the rest of the man's life. He would no longer be able to have any children now, so he wished the man to live an enjoyable life. Ah... He wouldn't be able to enjoy himself.

After he finished his prayer, he raised his head. The female employee asked him a question with a solemn expression on her face.

“Would you like to order something?”

“No. I'm here to meet someone..”

Before Artpe ascended the stairway, he wondered if he should go put on a codpiece. However, he gave up on the idea, since he couldn't stop her if she truly wanted to harm him.

[Nyaa, nyaa-ahhhhh?]

“I need a chastity belt instead of a codpiece? No, she has a law-abiding spirit. She won't lay her hands on an underage male.”

[Nyaa…….]

Artpe ignored Roa's narrowed eyes, and he knocked on the door at the end of the third floor. It was the corner room. She had been constantly emitting a thin thread of magical energy. It allowed him to locate her. Even if he didn't have his Read All Creation ability, he would have been able to easily locate her room.

[Come in.]

"I'm coming in."

Artpe heard Etna's reply. He relaxed as he opened the door when he heard her calm voice. For a split second, he worried a sack would be placed over his head. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

"Artpe."

"Hello, Etna."

A beauty with burning red eyes was standing there.

"……yes, hello. Are you feeling a bit better?"

"Yes."

He thought the greeting they had exchanged hadn't been that bad, but Etna remained still. She didn't budge from her initial position after opening the door. Artpe felt the need to say something, so he opened his mouth.

"I came here to give you what I promised. I wanted to come here as soon as possible, but I lost consciousness."

"It's all right. I haven't been waiting too long……"

Etna had a soft smile on her lips as she spoke. However, she clamped her mouth shut when she saw the sword that appeared in Artpe's hand.

The long sword had a red sword aura, and it was named the Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness. It was famous for being the sword of a knight, who performed admirably during the rebellion

within the Diaz kingdom. In truth, the Fire Spirit Meltia was sealed within the sword. It allowed the user to perform incredible feats, but in the end, it took the wielder's life as the price. It was a demonic sword.

Of course, Roa had completely extracted all the curse from it, so the Fire Spirit could leave the sword if it wanted to. This was obvious but the curse was something that couldn't be harvested so easily even if one wanted to do it.

".....no, I'm not alright anymore after seeing this. The curse... How were you able pull this off..... No, if I start talking about it, it'll lead me to talk about all the other thing I want to ask you."

He was sure he had done everything she wanted, yet Etna's expression remained absolutely serious. Her mouth moved several times as if she was about to say something, but in the end, she closed her eyes shut as she sat down on top of the bed.

The brief silence felt as if it had lasted an eternity. A hollow voice flowed out from her mouth..

"Artpe.... Who are you?"

"I'm young, yet I have a crazy combination of level and ability. I'm a damn fine kid magician."

"No, I'm not talking about that! There is this sword, and the infallibility you showed me that day..... Are you perhaps a...."

However, she couldn't finish her words. Artpe could clearly see the black shackles around her neck. It was an absolute yoke that couldn't be broken if one was from the Demon race..

"....what I'm trying to say is....."

The shackles disappeared. It seemed she was successful in choosing her words.

"I have a bad feeling about this. It is as if I'll have to fight you one day. It feels inevitable."

“I’m much weaker than you right now. If you want to kill me, now is the time.”

“.....eeek.”

Artpe spoke jokingly, and it caused Etna to glare at him as if she really wanted to kill him. Artpe finally smirked as he continued to speak.

“We aren’t going to fight right now, so why worry about it? If we do fight later on, we can worry about it when we reach that point.”

“I envy you. You are able to speak such words with ease. You always seemed like an old soul, yet you are acting your age right now.”

“I am a kid”

“.....yes, you are a kid. How the hell did I....”

After Etna finished her words, she let out a big sigh.

However, when she raised her head again, her expression became a bit brighter.

“All right. I give up. I’ll do as you’ve suggested. It would be foolish for me to worry about it. I’m living a life where I have no idea what I will do next.”

“Are you feeling a little bit better?”

“I’m not fine, but I decided to act as if it is fine. That is my specialty. Hoo-hoo.”

Her words made light of the situation, but from the perspective of someone hearing her words, he could tell that wasn’t the case. However, her attitude changed before Artpe could react and say anything. She acted as if the prior conversation had never happened.

“Hoo-ooh......”

Her body became a little bit less tense, and her eyes narrowed

slightly in a mischievous manner. She acted as if this was a normal interaction between a man and a woman. She asked him a question.

“So who is your girlfriend amongst the three of them?”

How come every single woman Artpe knew decided to use this question as an introduction? Artpe lamented as he opened his mouth.

“She’s the most pretty one.”

Of course, he didn’t have a girlfriend amongst the three of them. Even if his lie was revealed, he decided to pick lies that would put a broad smile on Etna’s face. When Etna heard his answer, she let out a sigh as she replied.

“I’m glad you didn’t answer by saying all three of them were your girlfriends.”

“What if I had given that answer?”

“I won’t stand for a playboy, who makes many women cry. That is why I would have put you in a situation where you would be able to make only one woman cry.”

Artpe got ready to run away as he spoke.

“I’m sorry, but could you translate it into words that I can understand?”

“I would have immediately kidnapped you, and I would have bounced from this place.”

“You stay there. Don’t come this way.”

“It’s a joke. I’m joking.”

She was sitting at the edge of the bed. She patted the spot next to her. Artpe’s own safety had been threatened, so he was very hesitant. However, in the end, he did as she wanted.

Their bodies weren’t touching, but the two of them were close

enough that they were able to feel the faint traces of each other's body temperature. Artpe weirdly felt ticklish, so he tried to widen the distance from her. Etna kept looking at him with soft eyes, so he had to give up on that idea.

“Is that your cat? She is incredibly well behaved.”

“She's my familiar.”

[Nyaa-ooh.]

It seemed Roa picked up on the mood, so she was well-behaved. No, she might be too afraid of Etna at an instinctual level. Etna extended her hand, yet Roa didn't even think about running away. She offered her body up to Etna. Roa was completely in a nonresistance mode.

Etna also realized this fact, so she let out a bitter laugh.

“.....it has also been like this. Animals have always been sensitive to my energy. It has always been like this.”

“I'll bring her back after I raise her. She'll be strong enough that she won't be afraid of you.”

“Oh my. Are you already requesting another date? I'm glad.”

Etna carefully retracted the hand she had extended towards Roa. This time she gently took Artpe's hand. Her hand was slender and delicate. Her hand felt hot as she grabbed his hand in its entirety.

When Artpe tilted his head in puzzlement, Etna pouted as she spoke.

“You said you wanted to hold my hand.”

“Ah. I cooked up those words, because I wanted your magical energy.”

“Ooh-doo-doohk.”

The same sound that was coming out of Etna's mouth was heard from the joints of Arte's hand. Etna ignored Artpe's scream as she

kept holding onto his hand. After a long while, she finally let go of his hand. His hand was red.

“You are young, yet you are trying to play with a woman.”

“Are you saying it would have been fine if I was older?”

“Yes.so please grow up fast..”

“.....huh?”

What the hell? Didn't he say something similar to someone? Artpe felt himself sink into an odd mood.

Before he could dredge up the answer from his memories, Etna extended her hands to grab his shoulders. She gently pulled him towards her, and she gave him a light kiss on his cheek. Her kiss felt blissful hot befitting the daughter of the Phoenix.

“Uh.....”

“Hoo-hooht.”

At the unexpected sneak attack, Artpe became dazed. Etna let out a bright smile as she stood up. There was a mischievous smile on her lips.

“When you grow up and if we don't need to fight each other at taht time, let's meet up once again in earnest.”

“Didn't I tell you that I have a girlfriend?”

“Hoo.”

Artpe used the invincible shield to protect himself, but his defense broke into tiny pieces. Etna snorted.

“You really think I can't tell that you were telling me a lie? You are great at hiding everything else. I don't know why you are so obtuse regarding this subject.”

“Uh.....”

....it was weird. Everyone seemed to be able to read his inner thoughts today. He wondered if a magic that revealed his inner

thoughts was placed on him. He explored his face with his hand. Etna let out a cloudless laughter when she saw this.

“I want to stay with you longer, but my time limit is approaching. I have to go now.”

“Etna?”

“Also, this is my present to you.”

Etna pushed the sword towards him. He didn't even have to check it. It was the Netherworld Flame Sword of Madness he had given her when he entered the room.

Artpe received the sword, and he looked over its information. The Fire Spirit Meltia wasn't residing within it, but a powerful fire energy remained within the sword. Artpe immediately realized that it was Etna's power.

It was absolutely inferior compared to the sword that had Meltia residing within it. However, the Record left behind by Meltia remained inside the sword, and it worked harmoniously with Etna's power. It had turned into an Artifact that was priceless.

“I'm not as good as you, but I'm skilled at enchanting items with my power. Please take care of this sword. You should think of it as me. Ah, you can't give it to that girl. I'll really hate you if you do.”

How the heck did she know that he had been planning on giving to Maetel.... He was having such thoughts, yet he shamelessly shook his head from side to side on the outside.

“No, I was going to use it. Don't worry about it.”

“Hoo-hooht. It sound like a lie, but I'll trust you. Be seeing you.”

In the next moment, Etna really disappeared from the spot. She completely disappeared using the same method she used in the pub couple days ago. However, she had traveled a much vaster distance compared to before. She controlled fire, yet she travelled quickly like the wind.

[Nyaa.]

At that moment, Roa was barely able to regain her composure. She hopped on top of Artpe's lap. She looked up at him as she cried. Her eyes were filled worry and fear.

[Nyaa-ahhhh.....]

"No, she isn't a woman that would be swayed by her affections. If a day comes where she has to kill me, she won't hesitate to kill me."

[Nyaa nyaa, nyaa-ooh-ahh.]

"Yes, if that happens, she'll probably be hurt more than me. That is why....."

Artpe thought about the lonely expression on her face, and the black shackles that encircled her neck. She was supposed to be a radiant fire that should be freer than anyone else. She wasn't able to spread her wings. When he thought about her miserable state, it made him grind his teeth.

Still, he was able to confirm something once again today. He was sure of it now.

In the past, the Demon king's power had felt absolute to him, but he was no longer afraid of it now.

"I'll end him with my own power this time around. Are you going to help me, Roa?"

[Nyaa!]

Roa gave a short yet fierce answer. Artpe smirked as he petted her head. Then he stood up. He equipped the flame sword given to him by Etna, and he hid it using his robe. Then he bravely headed outside.

"I'll take care of my remaining tasks."

After bartering with Mycenae, he was able to flawlessly rebuild the 1st barrier wall. It was already late into the night when he

returned to the inn.

It seemed Sherryl and Sienna had already become friends. They slept as they leaned against each other's shoulder. Unlike them, Maetel was glowering as she waited for him. She wasn't up for anything important.

"What do you have to say for yourself, Artpe?"

"You might not believe me, but nothing happened. I had other tasks I had to finish."

"I want to hear a detailed account of what you did. Come here."

"Yes, ma'am."

He wanted to go to sleep. The night was fast coming to an end. It took him 30 minutes to convince Maetel that nothing had gone on between Etna and him. After being harassed by her, he was finally able to go to sleep within her embrace.

From Maetel's perspective, she was trying to make up for the time and affection she had lost to Etna. This was nothing but a form of punishment from Artpe's perspective.

Still, it was strange. He was able to sleep really well that night within her embrace. He slept for three hours. He had been busy running around Frate, yet all the fatigue he had accumulated was completely washed away as if it had been a lie.

Chapter 71 - Underwater (1)

“Mmm…… Ah.”

When he opened his eyes, he was faced with Maetel's smooth and dazzling white neck. He tried to twist away from her, but Maetel had imprisoned him with her two arms. His attempt was met without much success. It wasn't as if she had learned ground technique from someone, yet she had a perfect hold on him. He was once again surprised by her talent.

“How the heck did I sleep like this.... No way. I'm sleepy again.”

Artpe couldn't escape, but it didn't feel tortuous or suffocating. The softest parts of her body was enclosed around him. It was such a perfect hug that he wondered if she had researched it.

‘It'll be bad if I sleep too deeply.... Ah, great. The sun is up.’

It was slightly tortuous, yet it also felt good. He was stuck in a strange imprisonment. He was barely able to raise his head to check outside the window. The world was still dominated by darkness. It was possible that he had slept for a whole day, but that was unlikely. If he really slept for a whole day, he couldn't do anything about it.

“Wake up, Maetel.”

“Mmm, Artpe.....? Eh-hee.”

When Maetel's eyes were half-open, she checked Artpe's face then she let out a bright laughter. It seemed she had been worried throughout the night that he would leave with Etna.

“Artpehhhh~”

“Stop acting like a baby and get up, you dolt.”

Maetel continued to cling to him, so Artpe flicked her forehead. He was able to safely extract himself from the tortuous yet blissful imprisonment. It seemed Maetel was no longer angry. She looked

to be enjoying herself even if she was hit by Artpe.

“You guys should get up too. We have a lot to do in the morning.”

“Oppa……?”

[M...master. I should have waited up for you. I apologize for falling asleep.]

[You don't have to apologize for that.]

Artpe watched his party members rub sleep out of their eyes. He sat them side by side then he emptied his Dimensional Pouch. Over 100 Skill Books and Spell Books fell out.

“What is all of this, Artpe!?”

“What do you mean what is all of this? These are Skills and Spells we'll learn. I acquired it after I sold the corpse of the Kraken.”

He had used about 50% of the Kraken's body in creating the barrier wall, but it still meant he had a lot of parts left to sell. The Kraken's body had been very large, and he had claimed most of it. He set aside a portion that his party might need in the future, and he had sold a significant amount of Kraken parts.

Krakens rarely appeared in this world, yet one could always find buyers that needed ingredients from a Kraken. At that moment, Mycenae was trying to sell her share of the Kraken's corpse, so the entire Anywhere company was working on this task. This was why Artpe was able to sell it so easily.

Of course, Skill Books and Spell Books were hard to acquire even if one had money. However, Mycenae was his personal merchant, and she played a big role in the extermination of the Kraken. This was why she was able to acquire her level 200 high rank Class as a merchant, and the items she could acquire increased precipitously.

Artpe wasn't someone that would squander such an opportunity. He was successful in acquiring a large amount of Skill and Spell Books. He chose to receive these items instead of money for the

Kraken by-products.

Since he had charged past level 200, he had the prerequisite needed to learn area of effect magic(AOE) spells, yet he couldn't purchase any from the Anywhere company. They weren't carrying any, and this was the only part of this venture he found wanting.

"I've purchased a total of 159 Skill Books and Spell Books. I have about 20,000 gold left, but the gold will probably be used to buy Skill Books and Spell Books at a later date."

"Artpe, are you sure you weren't meant to be a merchant instead of a hero....?"

He might have given Mycenae a bigger cut, so he could sell his portion more easily. It was a high level tactic where he gave benefits to his opponent, so he could smoothly take what he wants.

"There's too many!"

"Most of the skills that has nothing to do with the Warrior Priestess is all yours, so you should learn all of them."

Maetel was in shock, so she picked and learned a Skill Book at random. There was a profound and mysterious expression on her face.

"Blacksmith's Efficient Blade Sharpening.... Why would my power grow from learning this, Artpe?"

"If you want to use the Efficient Blade Sharpening skill, it requires an exquisite amount of physical strength."

"The world of Skills is very mysterious....."

"Wow. There are an incredible amount of Skills I can learn, oppa!"

"Ajumma's authority to acquire items was broadened. We now have direct access to the corrupted parts of the temple!"

"There are really too many bad people in this world!"

However, Sienna was able to become stronger thanks to these bad people. It was a very ironic situation.

“This one and this one.... Wow. Battle Priestesses use these types of Skills!”

“You’ll gain more in the future.”

“Ooooh. My body feels nauseous when I try to learn them one after another.”

Artpe smirked when he saw Maetel and Sienna quickly pick up and learn the Skill and Spell Books. He also started to learn the Spell Books. This was a bizarre sight that could only be seen with a hero’s party. Sherryl looked on in a dumbfounded manner.

“You learned the Carpentry skill, so how will that skill make you stronger? I I really don’t understand it, Artpe.”

“I also don’t know how it’ll be of help. However, I think i’ll aid me in my life as a dairy farmer.”

They quickly learned the Skills and Spells. It took 30 minutes for the hero’s party to clear the last of books that started out as a pile of books.

He had basically converted the Kraken’s body parts into Skill and Spell books. This was why both Artpe and Maetel was able to increase their Status to level 50 in one sitting. They were slowly reaching a point where they had learned every single Skill and Spell they could learn at their level.

On the other hand, Sienna wasn’t a hero, so there was a limit to which Skills she could learn. Even if one took that into consideration, he had purchased a massive quantity of Skill Books for a Warrior Priestess, and common spells that were shared with Priests. Her already monstrous Status had gone through a significant increase.

The defeat of the Kraken was also accepted as an Achievement, so she was able to advance to a level 200 high rank Class using the

Crystal Ball of Blessing. Her abilities reached a whole different dimension compared to what she was before the fight with the Kraken.

“Oppa, are we going to leave immediately?”

“We have one thing left to do. It is time to see the most important loots.”

[Nyaaaaaaa.]

Roa sensed that it was her turn, so she let out a very tired cry. However, Artpe was merciless. He picked her up by the scruff.

“I won’t drag this out. Spit out everything you acquired from the Kraken.”

[Nyaa! Nyaa-ah? Nyaa-ah-ah-ah!]

“You can’t.”

[Nyaa-oooh…….]

‘I like having numerous small items, but I also like big items! I want one for myself!’

Artpe coldly turned down Roa’s request.

Roa sulked as she opened her mouth. Exactly four items fell out of her mouth. The amount of loot from the enormous Kraken was small, but this meant each one of them were incredibly valuable.

“The first one is the bastard’s Magic Stone. If it is possible, I’ll use it later as an ingredient for Reinforcement.”

A level 267 Boss Monster Magic Stone was hard to come by. When the Magic Stone emitting a bright blue light appeared, he immediately placed it within his Dimensional Pouch.

The remaining items were metallic boots with the coloring of the ocean. The gauntlets were also letting out a similar luster... Then there was the Spell Book that was covered with a dark water colored leather. The leather binding was letting out a serious

amount of power. It was confirmation that the book contained a high level AOE magic.

“It finally came out.”

“I can feel an incredible amount of Mana from within…… I’m getting dizzy just looking at it!”

He became more sure when he saw Maetel’s reaction. She became nauseous at just seeing the title of the high rank Spell Book. Artpe gave the boots and gauntlets to Maetel and Sienna. Then he picked up the Spell Book with an elated expression on his face.

In sequence, his face started to crumple.

“God Flush…….”

“Artpe, what is it……?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

It was an AOE magic spell. It really was an AOE spell. The requirement for learning it was on the low side, and it was quite powerful. If he possessed the special requirements, he would be able to use it with relatively low Mana consumption. It was a mighty fine Great Magic, but……

“Why do you have such a sour expression on your face, Artpe?”

“Because…….”

Artpe let out a sigh as he gave an explanation.

“It is a Flush type magic. It’s a legendary magic spell that had a big impact when the sewers of the Magic Kingdom of Aedia was being made…… Moreover, I’ve never seen a prefix added to this type of magic.”

“Huh……?”

What did the magic spell have to do with the sewer system?

The party members didn’t know the origin story, so they tilted their heads in puzzlement. Artpe let out a vocal sigh, and he

learned the God Flush.

In the entirety of Artpe's past and current life, he had never seen this rare AOE magic. Just learning this single spell had increased his Magical Energy by 30. This fact actually made him feel more annoyed.

“Yes, if it was just strong, it would have been great. It is powerful, but.....”

The boots took on the qualities of the Kraken, so it was possible to stick onto any surface. It was an incredible Artifact that allowed the wearer to move freely underwater and above water.

On the other hand, the gauntlets stored Mana, and it was able to imbue properties of a Kraken and its strength to a weapon being held by the gauntlets. The two Artifacts went through three Reinforcement in the hands of Artpe. After they were changed into entirely new Artifacts, they were given to Maetel and Sienna.

“This is fun!”

“I think I've double in strength, oppa!”

“Yes, you did become twice as strong.”

They learned all the Skills and Spells. Moreover, the loots were distributed to the respective party members. If they met the Kraken from yesterday, they might be strong enough to face the Kraken in a direct confrontation.

Still, they needed to defeat the Kraken to have necessary power needed to defeat a Kraken in battle. It highlighted the absurdity of his life. It was akin to saying he needed to defeat the Demon King to be able to acquire a magic that will be able to inflict critical damage to the Demon King!

“I don't think there is another Kraken in this ocean.....”

“Artpe, I'm hungry.”

“The sun is about to come up, so we don't have time to eat. You'll

just have to pray the Mermaid Kingdom has dinner that's tastier than seaweed."

If one considered the power of the party, it wouldn't be a problem to cross into Aedia. In fact, it made one wonder if they could break into the Demon world. However, Artpe tried to be patient. There was a change from his past life to his current life. The Chef's recipe had changed. It was more aggressive and bold.

After he removed all traces of his party, they immediately exited the inn. Of course, the Lunatic Wave was still ongoing, so each barrier wall was manned by soldiers. Still, if they couldn't trick the soldiers, they had no rights to call themselves the hero's party.

"Artpe, it feels as if you haven't told us all the important facts."

Maetel walked beside him as she firmly grasped his sleeve. It seemed she just had this thought. She tilted her head in puzzlement as she asked the question.

"We are going into the ocean?"

"That's right."

"How are we going to breathe?"

Artpe let out a refreshing laughter as he replied.

"That is a good question."

"If you tell me that you don't know the answer, I'll hit you.with my lips. I'll hit Artpe's lips with my lips."

"I'm sorry. It was a joke. I'll tell you now, so stay there."

Before he knew it, the number of threats she issued had increased. Artpe seriously mulled it over. He wondered if he had ruined Maetel. He had no choice, but to reveal the correct answer.

"There is a magic spell called Underwater Breathing. It's difficulty is unnecessarily high, but it allows one to breath underwater. However, the spell doesn't help with one's mobility within the water, so it doesn't sell well. It is an ambiguous spell. I

was able to buy it cheap thanks to this fact.”

“Magic is really incredible.”

“I can’t always rely only on my Mana Strings.”

It would have been great if he was able to acquire a more proper AOE magic!

[Master.]

Sherryl the mermaid walked clumsily as she continued to follow after them. She grabbed Artpe’s sleeve, and she spoke as if she was whispering her words.

[The Road of Mermaids will open soon.]

“All right. Let’s go.”

Artpe led his party past the 3rd barrier wall, and they arrived at the 2nd barrier wall. The monsters were unable to get past the 1st barrier wall, which Artpe had reconstructed during the night. The city guards were split between the 1st and 2nd barrier wall.

The ones stationed on the 2nd barrier wall were all sleeping. The ones on the 1st barrier wall were quite loud as they moved around.

“Everyone be alert on your patrol! The Mermen might try to crawl over this wall at any moment!”

“Sir, it is strange. We haven’t seen any mermaids for awhile. Moreover, the other monsters are fearful of making contact with the wall. They are staying back....”

“The magician-nim is really amazing. He rebuilt the barrier wall yesterday.”

“I told you not to relax, you useless bastards!”

The party was moving carefully to avoid being seen by the knights. Naturally, they were able to see the 1st barrier wall, which Artpe had finished building in the night. It looked much sturdier than the 2nd barrier wall. It was impossible not to look at it.

The metallic barrier wall was letting out a subdued red light. No one knew why the barrier wall was metallic even though no metals were used in creating the wall. Fortunately, the water didn't cause the wall to rust.

“That's the new wall made by Artpe.”

“It's incredible, oppa. It looks incredibly sturdy.”

“Of course, it is. It better be if you consider the materials that went into it.”

It was true that the Hellfire Sentinel was completely destroyed in the fight against the Kraken. However, the wreckage containing the boiling magical energy was left behind. While Artpe blocked the swarming monsters, he retrieved the fragments. Then he combined it with the ingredients gathered from the Kraken's body to make a new 1st tier barrier wall. He then used three consecutive Reinforcements. The barrier wall was inferior to the Hellfire Sentinel, but it was incomparably sturdier than the original 1st tier barrier wall.

The lord of Frate was present during the construction process, and he was touched by Artpe's work. He suggested they name the wall after Artpe, but Artpe rejected the idea with a single stroke.

“So we'll cross the 1st barrier wall, and we'll immediately enter the ocean?”

“Even if we put aside the monsters for now, we'll never avoid the gazes of the people. That is why we'll enter from here.”

“From here……?”

Originally, the port was placed between the 1st and 2nd tier barrier wall. It had also been the location where the ships of the foreign nobles and merchants had been anchored. Of course, there were no traces of these ships left behind. The port was destroyed by the attacks from the Kraken, other monsters and Artpe's magic. It was just filled with water from the ocean now.

The monsters were unable to cross the 1st tier barrier wall, so an atmosphere akin to what one saw at a peaceful lake was formed. However, the traces of battle were within this body of water. It was filled with countless blood and tears of monsters and humans.

“Then there are the merchants ships filled with shipment buried within this water. Loots will also be present. They are all untouched.”

“.....Artpehh~”

“Even if you look at me with those eyes, you won’t be able to trouble my conscience. You should give up on it. I’m not stealing anything. I’m just excavating the treasures buried within the ocean!”

Artpe was in control of the finances of the hero’s party, so he was allowed to be shameless! Maetel looked as if she really wanted to argue with him, but she stopped herself. It seemed she had a rough idea on how much the Skill Books and Spell Books had cost him.

“I know Artpe isn’t always good. I know this, and I’m also bad for tolerating it.”

“I would go further than that. I’ll be blunt. I’m a bad guy. If that is all, let’s go!!”

Artpe casted the Underwater Breathing spell, and the party started walking. Of course, he didn’t need to cast it on the mermaid Sherryl and the magic beast Roa. The fact that he was able to cast it simultaneously on three people was incredible. It was a waste of breathe to expound on how amazing it was.

“Maetel, you should throw a rock over there.”

“Yes.”

Maetel’s powerful throw created a enormous ripple on the surface of the ocean. As a side benefit, several monsters nearby died. It wasn't even a Skill! She just threw a rock!

“.....mmm? I heard something suspicious from over there!”

“Could it be another Kraken coming this way? What’s going on!”

The plan to create a distraction with Maetel had created a result that was a bit excessive. All the knights on top of the 1st and 2nd tier barrier wall were looking towards the ocean. In that moment, the party entered into the artificial lake. They were able to make a clean escape, and the hero’s party submerged into the ocean.

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